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SERMONS

PREACHED UPON

SEVERAL OCCASIONS.

BY

ROBERT SOUTH, D.D.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER,

AND CANON OF CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD.

A NEW EDITION, IN SEVEN VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

OXFORD:

AT THE CLARENDON PRESS.

MDCCCXXXII.

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THE

CHIEF HEADS OF THE SERMONS.

VOL. II.

SERMONS XVII. XVIII.

OF THE HEINOUS GUILT OF TAKING PLEASURE IN OTHER MEN'S SINS.

ROMANS i. 32.

Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. Pp. 1. 28.

The sin of taking pleasure in other men's sins is not only distinct from, but also much greater than all those others mentioned in the foregoing catalogue, 1. To arrive at which pitch of sinning there is a considerable difficulty, 6. because every man has naturally a distinguishing sense of good and evil, and an inward satisfaction or dissatisfaction after the doing of either, and cannot quickly or easily extinguish this principle, but by another inferior principle gratified with objects contrary to the former, 3. And consequently no man is quickly or easily brought to take pleasure in his own, much less in other men's sins, 5. Of which sin,

I. The causes are, 1. The commission of the same sins in one's own person, 7. 2. The commission of them against the full conviction of conscience, 9. 3. The continuance in them, 12. 4. The inseparable poor-spiritedness of guilt, which is less uneasy in company, 14. 5. A peculiar unaccountable malignity of nature, 17.

II. The reasons why the guilt of that sin is so great, are, 1. That there is naturally no motive to tempt men to it, 21. 2. That the nature of this sin is boundless and un-

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limited, 24. 3. That this sin includes in it the guilt of many preceding ones, 26.

III. The persons guilty of that sin are generally such as draw others to it, 29; particularly, 1. who teach doctrines, 29. which represent sinful actions either as not sinful, 30. or as less sinful than they really are, 32. Censure of some modern casuists, 34. 2. Who allure men to sin through formal persuasion or inflaming objects, 36. 3. Who affect the company of vicious persons, 38. 4. Who encourage others in their sins by commendation, 39. or preferment, 41.

Lastly, the effects of this sin are, 1. Upon particular persons; that it quite depraves the natural frame of the heart, 42: it indisposes a man to repent of it, 44; it grows the more as a man lives longer, 45; it will damn more surely, because many are damned who never arrived to this pitch, 47. 2. Upon communities of men; that it propagates the practice of any sin till it becomes national, 48; especially where great sinners make their dependents their proselytes, 49. and the follies of the young carry with them the approbation of the old, 50. This the reason of the late increase of vice, 51.

SERMON XIX.

NATURAL RELIGION WITHOUT REVELATION, SUFFICIENT TO RENDER A SINNER INEXCUSABLE.

ROMANS i. 20.

So that they are without excuse. P. 53.

The apostle in this epistle addresses himself chiefly to the Jews; but in this first chapter he deals with the Greeks and Gentiles, 53. whom he charges with an inexcusable sinfulness, 53. And the charge contains in this, and in the precedent and subsequent verses,

I. The sin; [*that knowing God, they did not glorify him as God*, ver. 21.] idolatry; not that kind of one which worships that for God which is not God; but the other, which worships the true God by the mediation of corporeal resemblances, 54.

II. The persons guilty of this sin; [*such as professed*

themselves wise, ver. 22.] not the gnostics, but the old heathen philosophers, 57.

III. The cause of that sin, [*holding the truth in unrighteousness*, ver. 18.] 59. that the truths which they were accountable for, viz. 1. The being of a God, 60. 2. That he is the maker and governor of the world, 60. 3. That he is to be worshipped, 61. 4. That he is to be worshipped by pious practices, 61. 5. That every deviation from duty is to be repented of, 61. 6. That every guilty person is obnoxious to punishment, 62.

Were by them held in unrighteousness, 1. By not acting up to what they knew, 62. 2. By not improving those known principles into proper consequences, 64. 3. By concealing what they knew, 66.

IV. The judgment passed upon them, [*that they were without excuse*, ver. 20,] 70. that they were unfit not only for a pardon, but even for a plea, 71. Because,

1. The freedom of the will, which they generally asserted, excluded them from the plea of unwillingness, 72. 2. The knowledge of their understanding excluded them from the plea of ignorance, 73.

From all these we may consider,

1. The great mercy of God in the revelation of the gospel, 75.

2. The deplorable condition of obstinate sinners under it, 77.

SERMON XX.

OF SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION.

MATTHEW xxii. 12.

And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? P. 80.

The design of this parable, under the circumstantial passages of a wedding's royal solemnity, is to set forth the free offer of the gospel to the Jews first, and upon their refusal, to the Gentiles, 80. But it may be more peculiarly applied to the holy eucharist; which not only by analogy, but with propriety of speech, and from the very ceremony of breaking bread, may very well be called a wedding sup-

per, 82; to the worthy participation whereof there is indispensably required a suitable and sufficient preparation, 84. In which these conditions are required;

I. That the preparation be habitual, 90.

II. That it be also actual, 93; of which the principal ingredients are, 1. Self-examination, 96. 2. Repentance, 98. 3. Prayer, 100. 4. Fasting, 101. 5. Alms-giving, 103. 6. Charitable temper of mind, 104. 7. Reading and meditation, 106.

The reverend author seemed to have designed another discourse upon this text, because in this sermon he only despatches the first part, viz. the necessity of preparation; but proceeds not to the second, viz. that God is a severe animadverter upon such as partake without such a preparation, 84.

SERMON XXI.

OF THE FATAL IMPOSTURE AND FORCE OF WORDS.

ISAIAH v. 20.

Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil. P. 108. [Vol. iv. p. 203. 235. 265.]

Here a woe is denounced against those, not only in particular, who judicially pronounce the guilty innocent, and the innocent guilty; but in general, who by abusing men's minds with false notions, make evil pass for good, and good for evil, 108. And in the examination of this vile practice it will be necessary,

I. To examine the nature of good and evil, what they are, and upon what they are founded, viz. upon the conformity or unconformity to right reason, 111. Not upon the opinion, 113, or laws of men, 114; because then, 1. The same action under the same circumstances might be both morally good and morally evil, 117. 2. The laws could neither be morally good nor evil, 117. The same action might be in respect of the divine law commanding it, morally good; and of an human, forbidding it, morally evil, 118.

But that the nature of good and evil is founded upon a

jus naturale, antecedent to all *jus positivum*, may be exemplified in those two moral duties, towards God and towards one's neighbour, 118.

II. To shew the way how good and evil operate upon men's minds, viz. by their respective names or appellations, 121.

III. To shew the mischief arising from the misapplication of names, 122. For since, 1. the generality of men are absolutely governed by words and names, 122. and 2. chiefly in matters of good and evil, 128. which are commonly taken upon trust, by reason of the frequent affinity between vice and virtue, 129. and of most men's inability to judge exactly of things, 130. Thence may be inferred the comprehensive mischief of this misapplication, by which man is either, 1. deceived, 133. or 2. misrepresented, 135.

Lastly, to assign several instances, wherein those mischievous effects do actually shew themselves. [Vol. iv. p. 203.]

I. In religion and church, 205. such as calling, 1. The religion of the church of England, *popery*, 206. which calumny is confuted from the carriage of the church of Rome towards the church of England, 208. and from the church of England's denying the chief articles of the church of Rome, 209. 2. Schismatics, *true protestants*, 215. against whom it is proved, that they and the papists are not such irreconcileable enemies as they pretend to be, 215. 3. The last subversion of the church, *reformation*, 220. which mistaken word turned the monarchy into an anarchy, 220. 4. The execution of the laws, *persecution*, 222. by which sophistry the great disturbers of our church pass for innocent, and the laws are made the only malefactors, 223. 5. Base compliance and half-conformity, *moderation*, 224. both in church governors, 226. and civil magistrates, 227.

A terrible instance of pulpit impostors seducing the minds of men, 232.

II. In the civil government, 236, 241. (with an apology for a clergyman's treating upon this subject, 236.) such as calling, 1. Monarchy, *arbitrary power*, 243. 2. The prince's friends, *evil counsellors*, 247. 3. The enemies both of

prince and people, *public spirits*, 251. Malicious and ambitious designs, *liberty and property, and the rights of the subject*, 255. Together with a discovery of the several fallacies couched under those words, 245. 250. 252. 257.

The necessity of reflecting frequently upon the great long rebellion, 260.

III. In private interests of particular persons, 268. such as calling, 1. Revenge, *a sense of honour*, 269. 2. Bodily abstinence, with a demure, affected countenance, *piety and mortification*, 273. 3. Unalterable malice, *constancy*, 274. 4. A temper of mind resolved not to cringe and fawn, *pride, and morosity, and ill nature*, 276. and, on the contrary, flattery and easy simplicity, and good-fellowship, *good nature*, 280. 5. Pragmatical meddling with other men's matters, *fitness for business*, 281. Add to these, the calling covetousness, *good husbandry*, 284. prodigality, *liberality*, 285. justice, *cruelty;* and cowardice, *mercy*, 285.

A general survey and recollection of all that has been said on this immense subject, 285.

SERMON XXII.

PREVENTION OF SIN AN UNVALUABLE MERCY.

1 SAMUEL XXV. 32, 33.

And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with my own hand. P. 139.

This is David's retractation of his revenge resolved upon an insolent wealthy rustic, who had most unthankfully rejected his request with railing at his person and messengers, 139. From which we may,

I. Observe the greatness of sin-preventing mercy, 141. Which appears, 1. From the deplorable condition of the sinner, before that mercy prevents him, 142. 2. From the cause of that mercy, which is God's free grace, 147. 3. From the danger of sin unprevented, which will then be certainly

committed; and in such deliberate commission, there is a greater probability that it will not, than that it will be pardoned, 148. because every commission hardens the soul in that sin, and disposes the soul to proceed further, and it is not in the sinner's power to repent, 149. 4. From the advantages of the prevention of sin above those of the pardon of it, 151. which are the clearness of a man's condition, 151. and the satisfaction of his mind, 154.

II. Make several useful applications, 155. As, 1. To learn how vastly greater the pleasure is upon the forbearance, than in the commission of sin, 155. 2. To find out the disposition of one's heart by this sure criterion, with what ecstasy he receives a spiritual blessing, 156. 3. To be content, and thankfully to acquiesce in any condition, and under the severest passages of Providence, 158. with relation to health, 158. reputation, 159. and wealth, 160.

SERMONS XXIII. XXIV.

OF THE NATURE AND MEASURES OF CONSCIENCE.

1 JOHN iii. 21.

Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, we have confidence toward God. Pp. 163. 194.

It is of great moment and difficulty to be rationally satisfied about the estate of one's soul, 163: in which weighty concern we ought not to rely upon such uncertain rules, 164. as these: 1. The general esteem of the world, 164. 2. The judgment of any casuist, 166. 3. The absolution of any priest, 168. 4. The external profession even of a true religion, 170.

But a man's own heart and conscience, above all other things, is able to give him confidence towards God, 173. In order to which we must know,

I. How the heart or conscience ought to be informed, 174. viz. by right reason and scripture, 175. and endeavouring to employ the utmost of our ability to get the clearest knowledge of our duty; and thus to come to that confi-

dence, which, though it amounts not to an infallible demonstration, yet is a rational, well-grounded hope, 176.

II. By what means we may get our heart thus informed, 179. viz. 1. By a careful attention to the dictates of reason and natural morality, 179. 2. By a tender regard to every pious motion of God's Spirit, 181. 3. By a study of the revealed word of God, 184. 4. By keeping a frequent and impartial account with our conscience, 187.

With this caution, lest either, on the one side, every doubting may overthrow our confidence, 190. or, on the other, a bare silence of conscience raise it too much, 191.

III. Whence the testimony of conscience is so authentic, 195. viz. 1. Because it is commissioned to this office by God himself, 197. And there is examined the absurdity and impertinence, 199. the impudence and impiety of false pretences of conscience, 206; such particularly as those of schismatical dissenters, 201, 209. who oppose the solemn usages of our church; the necessity of which is founded upon sound reason, 204. 2. Because it is quicksighted, 211. tender and sensible, 213. exactly and severely impartial, 215.

IV. Some particular instances, wherein this confidence suggested by conscience exerts itself, 217. viz. 1. In our addresses to God by prayer, 217. 2. At the time of some notable sharp trial, 219. as poverty, 220. calumny and disgrace, 221. 3. Above all others at the time of death, 222.

SERMON XXV.

THE DOCTRINE OF MERIT STATED, AND THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF MAN'S MERITING OF GOD.

JOB xxii. 2.

Can a man be profitable to God? P. 231.

It is an impossible thing for man to merit of God, 231. And although,

I. Men are naturally prone to persuade themselves they can merit, 234. because,

1. They naturally place too high a value upon themselves and performances, 235.

2. They measure their apprehensions of God by what they observe of worldly princes, 236. yet,

II. Such a persuasion is false and absurd, 238. because the conditions required in merit are wanting; viz.

1. That the action be not due, 239. But man lies under an indispensable obligation of duty to God by the law of nature, as God's creature, 240. and servant, 241. and by God's positive law, 244.

2. That the action may add to the state of the person of whom it is to merit, 244. But God is a perfect being, wanting no supply, 245. and man is an inconsiderable creature, beholden for every thing to every part of the creation, 245.

3. That the action and reward may be of an equal value, 248. which cannot be in the best of our religious performances, 248. notwithstanding the popish distinction between merit of condignity and congruity, 249.

4. That the action be done by the man's sole power, without the help of him of whom he is to merit, 252. But God worketh in us not only to do, but also to will, 252. And,

III. This persuasion hath been the foundation of great corruptions in religion, 254. viz. Pelagianism, 256. and popery, 257.

But though we are not able to merit, yet,

IV. This ought not to discourage our obedience, 258. Since,

1. A beggar may ask an alms, which he cannot claim as his due, 259.

2. God's immutable veracity and promise will oblige him to reward our sincere obedience, 259.

SERMON XXVI.

OF THE LIGHT WITHIN US.

LUKE xi. 35.

Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. P. 261.

The light within us, or right reason, is our conscience,

whose duties are to inform and to oblige; which is capable of being turned into darkness; a very considerable evil, and a great danger of falling into it, 261. The cause of this light's being darkened, is,

I. In general; every thing which either defiles the conscience, 268. or weakens it by putting a bias upon its judging faculty, 271.

II. In particular; every kind and degree of sin, considered,

1. In the act, 273. And thus every commission of any great sin darkens the conscience, 273.

2. In the habit, 272. And thus the repeated practice of sin puts out its light, 275.

3. In the principle, 272. And thus every vicious affection perverts the judging, and darkens the discerning power of conscience, 277. Such as, 1. Sensuality, 279. by the false pleasures of lust, 281. of intemperance, 283. 2. Covetousness, 285. 3. Ambition or pride, 286. And many others besides, 289.

Thence a man may learn what he is to avoid, that he may have a clear, impartial, and right-judging conscience, 290.

SERMON XXVII.

OF LOVING OUR ENEMIES.

MATTHEW v. 44.

But I say unto you, Love your enemies. P. 293.

The duty here enjoined by Christ is not opposed to the Mosaic law, but to the doctrine of the scribes and pharisees, 293. For the matter of all the commandments, except the fourth, is of natural, moral right, 293. and there is no addition of any new precepts, but only of some particular instances of duty, 295. with an answer to some objections concerning the commands of loving God with all our heart, 298. and laying down our life for our brother, 299. Then it is proved, that Christ opposed not Moses's law as faulty or imperfect, but only the comments of the scribes and pharisees upon or rather against it, 300. Among

the duties here enjoined by Christ, is to love our enemies, 302. by which,

I. Negatively, 302. is not meant,

1. A fair deportment and amicable language, 302.

2. Fair promises, 305.

3. A few kind offices, 307. But,

II. Positively, 309. is meant,

1. A discharging the mind of all the leaven of malice, 309.

2. The doing all real offices of kindness, that opportunity shall lay in the way, 310.

3. The praying for them, 312.

All which are not inconsistent with a due care of defending and securing ourselves against them, 314.

III. This love of enemies may be enforced by many arguments drawn from,

1. Their condition; as they are joined with us in the community of the same nature, 315. or (as it may happen) of the same religion, 316. or as they may be capable, if not of being made friends, yet of being shamed and rendered inexcusable, 317.

2. The excellency of the duty itself, 318.

3. The great example of our Saviour, 319. and that of a king, upon the commemoration of whose nativity and return this sermon was preached, 320.

Lastly, because this duty is so difficult, we ought to beg God's assistance against the opposition which flesh and blood will make to it, 321.

SERMON XXVIII.

FALSE FOUNDATIONS REMOVED, AND TRUE ONES LAID.

MATTH. vii. 26, 27.

And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. P. 324.

Our Saviour teaches us not to build upon a deceitful

bottom, in the great business of our eternal happiness, 325. but only upon practice and obedience: because,

I. That is the best and surest foundation, 326. being,

1. The only thing that can mend our corrupt nature, 326.

2. The highest perfection of our nature, 328.

3. The main end of religion, 329. as the designs of it in this world are the honour of God, 329. and the advantage of society, 330.

II. All other foundations are false, 331. such as

1. A naked, unoperative faith, 332.

2. The goodness of the heart and honesty of intention, 333.

3. Party and singularity, 335. because the piety of no party can sanctify its proselytes, 336. and such an adhesion to a party carries with it much of spiritual pride in men, who naturally have a desire of preeminence, and a spirit of opposition to such as are not of their own way, 337.

III. Such false foundations, upon trial, will be sure to fall, 338. which is shewed from,

1. The Devil's force and opposition, 338. which is sudden and unexpected, 339. furious and impetuous, 340. restless and importunate, 341.

2. The impotence and non-resistance of the soul, 342. which is frequently unprepared, weak, and inconstant, 342.

IV. The fall will be very great, 344. being scandalous and diffusive, 344. hardly and very rarely recoverable, 345.

Therefore no man must venture to build his salvation upon false and sinking grounds, 346. but only upon such terms as God will deal with him, viz. a perfect obedience, 348.

SERMON XXIX.

A TRUE STATE AND ACCOUNT OF THE PLEA OF A TENDER CONSCIENCE.

1 Cor. viii. 12.

But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. P. 350.

The apostle treateth of a weak conscience in new con-

verts from Judaism [in the 14th of Rom.] and from heathenism [here] 350. in these words; towards the understanding of which we must know,

I. What a weak conscience is, 353. not that which is improperly called tender, 353. but the weakness here spoken of is opposed to faith, 354. and implies,

1. The ignorance of some action's lawfulness, 356. not wilful, but such a one as is excusable, and the object of pity, 367. arising from the natural weakness of the understanding, or from the want of opportunity or means of knowledge, 357.

2. The suspicion of some action's unlawfulness, 358.

3. A religious abstinence from the use of that thing, of the unlawfulness whereof it is ignorant or suspicious, 359.

II. How such a weak conscience is wounded, 360. viz.

1. By being grieved and robbed of its peace, 360.

2. By being emboldened to act against its present persuasion, 361. either through example, 361. or through a command, with the conjunction of some reward or penalty, 362. descending from a private or a public person, 363.

III. We may thence infer,

1. That none having been brought up and long continued in the communion of a true church, having withal the use of his reason, can justly plead weakness of conscience, 365.

2. That such a weakness can upon no sufficient ground be continued in, 369.

3. That the plea of it ought not to be admitted in prejudice of the laws, which are framed for the good, not of any particular persons, but of the community, 371. For the ill consequences would be, that there could be no limits assigned to this plea, 371. nor any evidence of its sincerity, 372. and this would absolutely bind the magistrate's hands, 373.

Besides, such pleas are usually accompanied with partiality, 374. and hypocrisy, such as those of the dissenters, 375. which upon the foregoing reasons ought not to be allowed, 376.

SERMON XXX.

CHRISTIANITY MYSTERIOUS, AND THE WISDOM OF GOD IN MAKING IT SO.

1 Cor. ii. 7.

But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery. P. 378.

The apostle's design here is to set forth the transcendent worth of the gospel by two qualifications eminently belonging to it, 378. viz.

I. That it is the wisdom of God, 379. a wisdom respecting speculation, and here principally relating to practice, 379. a wisdom as irresistibly powerful as it is infallible, 380.

II. That this wisdom is in a mystery, 381.

1. In the nature of the things treated of in the Christian religion, 381. which are of difficult apprehension for their greatness, 382. spirituality, 384. strangeness, 385. as may be exemplified in two principal articles of it, regeneration, 387. and the resurrection, 387.

2. In the ends of it, 388. It is as much the design of religion to oblige men to believe the *credenda* as to practise the *agenda;* and there is as clear a reason for the belief of the one, as for the practice of the other, 389. But their mysteriousness, 1. Makes a greater impression of awe, 391. 2. Humbles the pride of men's reason, 394. 3. Engages us in a more diligent search, 396. 4. Will, when fully revealed, make part of our happiness hereafter, 399.

Thence we may learn in such important points of religion,

1. To submit to the judgment of the whole church in general, and of our spiritual guides in particular, 401.

2. Not to conclude every thing impossible, which to our reason is unintelligible, 404.

3. Nor by a vain presumption to pretend to clear up all mysteries in religion, 405.

SERMON XXXI.

THE LINEAL DESCENT OF JESUS OF NAZARETH FROM DAVID BY HIS BLESSED MOTHER THE VIRGIN MARY.

REV. xxii. 16.

I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. P. 410.

In this book of mysteries, nothing is more mysterious than what is contained in these words, the union of the divinity and humanity in our Saviour's person, 410. He is,

I. In his divinity, the root of David, having a being before him, 411. a being which had no beginning, equal to his Father: though his divinity is denied by the Arians: and his preexistence to his humanity by the Socinians, 411.

II. In his humanity, the offspring of David, 417. being in St. Matthew's genealogy, naturally the son of David; and in that of St. Luke, legally the king of the Jews, 418.

III. The bright and morning star, 428. with relation,

1. To the nature of its substance; he was pure, without the least imperfection, 428.

2. To the manner of its appearance; he appeared small in his humanity, though he was the great almighty God. 430.

3. To the quality of its operation, 431. open and visible by his light, chasing away the heathenish false worship, the imperfect one of the Jews, and all pretended Messiahs, 431. secret and invisible by his influence, illuminating our judgment, bending our will, and at last changing the whole man, 435.

SERMON XXXII.

JESUS OF NAZARETH PROVED THE TRUE AND ONLY PROMISED MESSIAH.

JOHN i. 11.

He came to his own, and his own received him not. P. 437.

No scripture has so directly and immoveably stood in the way of the several opposers of the divinity of our Saviour,

as this chapter, 438. whereof this text is a part: in which we have,

I. Christ's coming into the world, 439. who,

1. Was the second Person in the glorious Trinity, the ever blessed and eternal Son of God, 440.

2. Came from the bosom of his Father, and the incomprehensible glories of the Godhead, 444.

3. Came to the Jews, who were his own by right of consanguinity, 445.

4. When they were in their lowest estate, 448. national, 448. and ecclesiastical, 449. In which we may consider the invincible strength and the immoveable veracity of God's promise, 450.

II. Christ rejected by his own, 452. For the Jews'

1. Exceptions were, 1. That he came not as a temporal prince, 453. 2. That he set himself against Moses's law, 454.

2. The unreasonableness of which exceptions appears from this: 1. That the Messiah's blessings were not to be temporal, 455. and he himself, according to all the prophecies of scripture, was to be of a low, despised estate, 457. 2. That Christ came not to destroy, but to fulfil and abrogate Moses's law, 459.

3. The Jews had great reasons to induce them to receive him. For, 1. All the marks of the Messiah did most eminently appear in him, 460. 2. His whole behaviour among them was a continued act of mercy and charity, 462.

Lastly, the Jews are not the only persons concerned in this guilt, but also all vitious Christians, 463.

SERMON XXXIII.

THE MESSIAH'S SUFFERINGS FOR THE SINS OF THE PEOPLE.

ISAIAH liii. 8.

For the transgression of my people was he stricken. P. 468.

There are several opinions concerning the person here spoken of by the prophet, 469. But setting aside those of later interpreters, who differ even among themselves, 470. we

may safely with all the ancients affirm him to be the Messiah, 474. and this Messiah to be no other than Jesus of Nazareth, 474. In these words we may consider,

I. That he was stricken; his suffering, 474. in its latitude and extent, 475. in its intenseness and sharpness, 479. and in its author, which was God, 481.

II. That he was stricken for transgression; the quality of his suffering was penal and expiatory; he was punished for sins past, not to prevent sins for the future, 484. He bore our sins, his soul was made an offering for sin, 486. He was qualified to pay an equivalent compensation to the divine justice, by the infinite dignity and the perfect innocence of his person, 487.

III. That he was stricken for God's people; the cause of his suffering, 488. Man's redemption proceeds upon a twofold covenant; one of suretyship, the other of grace, 489. and, without any violation of the divine justice, Christ suffered for men; upon the account of his voluntary consent; and because of his relation to them, as he was their king and head, and their surety, 491.

Thence we should learn also to suffer for Christ,

1. By self-denial and mortification, 492.

2. By cheerfully undergoing troubles and afflictions in this world, 493.

SERMON XXXIV.

UPON THE RESURRECTION.

ACTS ii. 24.

Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. P. 496.

The necessary belief of a future state has been confirmed by revelation and exemplification, 497. chiefly in that of the resurrection of Christ, 499. whom

I. God hath raised up; such an action proclaiming an omnipotent cause, 500. And,

II. The manner of his being raised was by having loosed the pains of death, 501. with an explication of the word *pains*, 501. And,

III. The ground of his resurrection was the impossibility of his being holden of it, 505. which impossibility was founded upon,

1. The hypostatical union of Christ's human nature to his divine, 505.

2. The immutability of God, in respect of his eternal decree, 507. and of his promise, 509.

3. The justice of God, 511.

4. The necessity of Christ's being believed in as a Saviour, 512.

5. The nature of Christ's priesthood, 514.

The belief of Christ's resurrection affords us,

1. The strongest dehortation from sin, 516.

2. The most sovereign consolation against death, 516.

SERMON XXXV.

THE CHRISTIAN PENTECOST, OR THE SOLEMN EFFUSION OF THE HOLY GHOST, IN THE SEVERAL MIRACULOUS GIFTS CONFERRED BY HIM UPON THE APOSTLES AND FIRST CHRISTIANS.

1 Cor. xii. 4.

Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. P. 518.

The Holy Ghost, the design of whose mission was to confirm Christianity, did it by an effusion of miraculous gifts upon the first messengers of it, 518. In which we consider,

I. What those gifts were, 520. either,

1. Ordinary, conveyed to us by the mediation of our own endeavours, 520. or,

2. Extraordinary, immediately from God alone, 521. such as the gift of tongues, of healing the sick and raising the dead, of prophecy, 522. the continuation of which miraculous gifts in the church was but for a time, 523.

II. The diversity of those gifts, 528. which consisted,

1. In variety, 528.

2. Not in contrariety, 536.

III. The consequences of their emanation from one and the same Spirit, 537. which are,

1. That this Spirit is God, and hath a personal subsistence, 537.

2. That every one of us may learn humility under, and content with his own abilities, 539.

3. That it affords a touchstone for the trial of spirits, 541. as in the gift of prophecy, 541. of healing, 542. of discerning of spirits, 542. of divers tongues, 542. of interpreting, 543. By which trial we may discover some men's false pretences to gifts of the Spirit, 543.

4. That knowledge and learning are not opposite to grace, 545.

SERMON XXXVI.

THE PECULIAR CARE AND CONCERN OF PROVIDENCE FOR THE PROTECTION AND DEFENCE OF KINGS.

PSALM cxliv. 10.

It is he that giveth salvation unto kings. P. 547.

The relation between prince and subject involves in it obedience and protection; and the same relation is between princes and God, who gives salvation unto kings, 547. whose providence over them,

I. Is peculiar and extraordinary, 548. besides the usual operation of causes, 549. contrary to the design of expert persons, 550. beyond the power of the cause employed, 551.

II. Making use of extraordinary means, 552. as,

1. By endowing them with a more than ordinary sagacity, 552.

2. By giving them a singular courage and resolution, 554.

3. By a strange disposition of events for their preservation, 556.

4. By inclining the hearts of their people towards them, 558.

5. By rescuing them from unseen and unknown mischiefs, 560.

6. By imprinting an awe of their authority on the minds of their subjects, 562.

7. By disposing their hearts to virtue and piety, 564.

III. The reason of this particular providence is,

1. Because they are the greatest instruments to support government; to the ends of which monarchy is best adapted; and the greatness of which most depends upon their personal qualifications, 567.

2. Because they have the most powerful influence upon the concerns of religion, 571.

IV. Hence, 1. Princes may learn their duty towards God, 573. And, 2. Subjects may learn theirs towards their prince, 573.

THE

FIRST SERMON

PREACHED UPON

ROMANS I. 32.

Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

FROM the beginning of the 18th verse to the end of the 31st, (the verse immediately going before the text,) we have a catalogue of the blackest sins that human nature, in its highest depravation, is capable of committing; and this so perfect, that there seems to be no sin imaginable but what may be reduced to, and comprised under, some of the sins here specified. In a word, we have an abridgment of the lives and practices of the whole heathen world; that is, of all the baseness and villainy that both the corruption of nature, and the instigation of the devil, could for so many ages, by all the arts and opportunities, all the motives and incentives of sinning, bring the sons of men to. And yet, as full and comprehensive as this catalogue of sin seems to be, it is but of sin under a limitation; an universality of sin under a certain kind; that is, of all sins of direct and personal commission. And you will say, is not this a sufficient comprehension of all? For is not a man's person the compass of his actions? Or, can he operate further than he does

exist? Why yes, in some sense he may; he may not only commit such and such sins himself, but also take pleasure in others that do commit them; which expression implies these two things: first, That thus to take pleasure in other men's sins, is a distinct sin from all the former: and secondly, That it is much greater than the former. Forasmuch as these terms, *not only do the same, but also take pleasure*, &c. import aggravation, as well as distinction; and are properly an advance *a minore ad majus*, a progress to a further degree. And this indeed is the farthest that human pravity can reach, the highest point of villainy that the debauched powers of man's mind can ascend unto. For surely that sin that exceeds idolatry, monstrous unnatural lusts, covetousness, maliciousness, envy, murder, deceit, backbiting, hatred of God, spitefulness, pride, disobedience to parents, covenant-breaking, want of natural affection, implacableness, unmercifulness, and the like: I say, that sin, that is a pitch beyond all these, must needs be such an one as must nonplus the devil himself to proceed further: it is the very extremity, the fulness, and the concluding period of sin, the last line and finishing stroke of the devil's image drawn upon the soul of man.

Now the sense of the words may be fully and naturally cast into this one proposition, which shall be the subject of the following discourse; *viz.*

That the guilt arising from a man's delighting or taking pleasure in other men's sins, or (which is all one) in other men for their sins, is greater than he can possibly contract by a commission of the same sins in his own person.

For the handling of which, I cannot but think it

superfluous to offer at any explication of what it is, to take pleasure in other men's sins; it being impossible for any man to be so far unacquainted with the motions and operations of his own mind, as not to know how it is affected and disposed, when any thing pleases or delights him. And therefore I shall state the prosecution of the proposition upon these following things.

I. I shall shew what it is that brings a man to such a disposition of mind, as to take pleasure in other men's sins.

II. I shall shew the reasons why a man's being disposed to do so, comes to be attended with such an extraordinary guilt: and,

III. and lastly, I shall declare what kind of persons are to be reckoned under this character. Of each of which in their order.

And first, for the first of these, What it is that brings a man, &c.

In order to which, I shall premise these four considerations.

1. That every man naturally has a distinguishing sense of *turpe et honestum;* of what is honest, and what is dishonest; of what is fit, and what is not fit to be done. There are those practical principles and rules of action, treasured up in that part of man's mind, called by the schools συντήρησις, that, like the candle of the Lord, set up by God himself in the heart of every man, discovers to him both what he is to do, and what to avoid: they are *a light, lighting every man that cometh into the world.*

And in respect of which principally it is, that God is said not to have *left himself without witness*

in the world; there being something fixed in the nature of man, that will be sure to testify and declare for him.

2. The second thing to be considered is, That there is consequently upon this distinguishing principle an inward satisfaction or dissatisfaction arising in the heart of every man, after he has done a good or an evil action; an action agreeable to, or deviating from, this great rule. And this, no doubt, proceeds not only from the real unsuitableness that every thing sinful or dishonest bears to the nature of man, but also from a secret, inward, foreboding fear, that some evil or other will follow the doing of that which a man's own conscience disallows him in. For no man naturally is or can be cheerful immediately upon the doing of a wicked action: there being something within him that presently gives sentence against him for it: which, no question, is the voice of God himself, speaking in the hearts of men, whether they understand it or no; and by secret intimations giving the sinner a foretaste of that direful cup, which he is like to drink more deeply of hereafter.

3. The third thing to be considered is, That this distinguishing sense of good and evil, and this satisfaction or dissatisfaction of mind consequent upon a man's acting suitably or unsuitably to it, is a principle neither presently nor easily to be worn out or extinguished. For besides that it is founded in nature, (which kind of things are always most durable and lasting,) the great important end that God designs it for, (which is no less than the government of the noblest part of the world, mankind,) sufficiently shews the necessity of its being rooted

deep in the heart, and put beyond the danger of being torn up by any ordinary violence done to it.

4. The fourth and last thing to be considered is, That that which weakens, and directly tends to extinguish this principle, (so far as it is capable of being extinguished,) is an inferior, sensitive principle, which receives its gratifications from objects clean contrary to the former; and which affect a man in the state of this present life, much more warmly and vividly than those which affect only his nobler part, his mind. So that there being a contrariety between those things that conscience inclines to, and those that entertain the senses; and since the more quick and affecting pleasure still arises from these latter, it follows that the gratifications of these are more powerful to command the principles of action than the other, and consequently are, for the most part, too hard for, and victorious over, the dictates of right reason.

Now from these four considerations, thus premised, we naturally infer these two things:

First, That no man is quickly or easily brought to take a full pleasure and delight in his own sins. For though sin offers itself in never so pleasing and alluring a dress at first, yet the remorse, and inward regrets of the soul, upon the commission of it, infinitely overbalance those faint and transient gratifications it affords the senses. So that, upon the whole matter, the sinner, even at his highest pitch of enjoyment, is not pleased with it so much, but he is afflicted more. And, as long as these inward rejolts and recoilings of the mind continue, (which they will certainly do for a considerable part of a man's life,) the sinner will find his accounts of

pleasure very poor and short, being so mixed and indeed overdone with the contrary impressions of trouble upon his mind, that it is but a bitter-sweet at best; and the fine colours of the serpent do by no means make amends for the smart and poison of his sting.

Secondly, The other thing to be inferred is, that, as no man is quickly or easily brought to take a full pleasure or delight in his own sins, so much less easily can he be brought to take pleasure in those of other men. The reason is, because the chief motive, as we have observed, that induces a man to sin, which is the gratification of his sensitive part, by a sinful act, cannot be had from the sins of another man; since naturally, and directly, they affect only the agent that commits them. For certainly another man's intemperance cannot affect my sensuality, any more than the meat and drink that I take into my mouth can please his palate: but of this more fully in some of the following particulars.

In the mean time, it is evident from reason, that there is a considerable difficulty in a man's arriving to such a disposition of mind, as shall make him take pleasure in other men's sins; and yet it is also as evident from the text, and from experience too, that some men are brought to do so. And therefore, since there is no effect, of what kind soever, but is resolvable into some cause; we will inquire into the cause of this vile and preternatural temper of mind, that should make a man please himself with that which can no ways reach or affect those faculties and principles, which nature has made the proper seat and subject of pleasure. Now the causes (or at least some of the causes) that debauch and

corrupt the mind of man to such a degree, as to take pleasure in other men's sins, are these five.

1. A commission of the same sins in a man's own person. This is imported in the very words of the text; where it is said of such persons, that *they not only do the same things;* which must therefore imply that they do them. It is conversation and acquaintance, that must give delight in things and actions, as well as in persons: and it is trial that must begin the acquaintance. It being hardly imaginable, that one should be delighted with a sin at second hand, till he has known it at the first. Delight is the natural result of practice and experiment; and when it flows from any thing else, so far it recedes from nature. None look with so much pleasure upon the works of art, as those who are artists themselves. They are therefore their delight, because they were heretofore their employment; and they love to see such things, because they once loved to do them. In like manner, a man must sin himself into a love of other men's sins; for a bare notion or speculation of this black art will not carry him so far. No sober, temperate person in the world, (whatsoever other sins he may be inclinable to, and guilty of,) can look with any complacency upon the drunkenness and sottishness of his neighbour; nor can any chaste person (be his other failings what they will) reflect with any pleasure or delight upon the filthy, unclean conversation of another, though never so much in fashion, and vouched, not by common use only, but applause. No, he must be first an exercised, thorough-paced practitioner of these vices himself, and they must have endeared themselves to him by those personal

gratifications he had received from them, before he can come to like them so far as to be pleased and enamoured with them wheresoever he sees them. It is possible indeed, that a sober or a chaste person, upon the stock of ill-will, envy, or spiritual pride, (which is all the religion that some have,) may be glad to see the intemperance and debauchery of some about them; but it is impossible that such persons should take any delight in the men themselves for being so. The truth is, in such a case, they do not properly delight in the vice itself, though they inwardly rejoice (and after a godly sort, no doubt) to see another guilty of it; but they delight in the mischief and disaster which they know it will assuredly bring upon him whom they hate and wish ill to: they rejoice not in it, as in a delightful object, but as in a cause and means of their neighbour's ruin. So grateful, nay, so delicious, are even the horridest villainies committed by others to the pharisaical piety of some; who in the mean time can be wholly unconcerned for the reproach brought thereby upon the name of God and the honour of religion, so long as by the same their sanctified spleen is gratified in their brother's infamy and destruction.

This therefore we may reckon upon, that scarce any man passes to a liking of sin in others, but by first practising it himself; and consequently may take it for a shrewd indication and sign, whereby to judge of the manners of those who have sinned with too much art and caution to suffer the eye of the world to charge some sins directly upon their conversation. For though such kind of men have lived never so much upon the reserve, as to their personal

behaviour, yet, if they be observed to have a particular delight in, and fondness for, persons noted for any sort of sin, it is ten to one but there was a communication in the sin, before there was so in affection. The man has, by this, directed us to a copy of himself; and though we cannot always come to a sight of the original, yet by a true copy we may know all that is in it.

2dly, A second cause that brings a man to take pleasure in other men's sins is, not only a commission of those sins in his own person, but also a commission of them against the full light and conviction of his conscience. For this also is expressed in the text; where the persons charged with this wretched disposition of mind are said to have been such as *knew the judgment of God, that they who committed such things were worthy of death.* They knew that there was a righteous and a searching law, directly forbidding such practices; and they knew, that it carried with it the divine stamp, that it was the law of God; they knew also, that the sanction of it was under the greatest and dreadfullest of all penalties, death. And this surely, one would think, was knowledge enough to have opened both a man's eyes, and his heart too; his eyes to see, and his heart to consider, the intolerable mischief that the commission of the sin set before him must infallibly plunge him into. Nevertheless, the persons here mentioned were resolved to venture, and to commit the sin, even while conscience stood protesting against it. They were such as broke through all mounds of law, such as laughed at the sword of vengeance, which divine justice brandished in their faces. For we must know, that God has set *a flaming sword,* not only

before paradise, but before hell itself also, to keep men out of this, as well as out of the other. And conscience is the angel, into whose hand this sword is put. But if now the sinner shall not only wrestle with this angel, but throw him too, and win so complete a victory over his conscience, that all these considerations shall be able to strike no terror into his mind, lay no restraint upon his lusts, no control upon his appetites; he is certainly too strong for the means of grace, and his heart lies open, like a broad and high road, for all the sin and villainy in the world freely to pass through.

The truth is, if we impartially consider the nature of these sins against conscience, we shall find them such strange paradoxes, that a man must balk all common principles, and act contrary to the natural way and motive of all human actions, in the commission of them. For that which naturally moves a man to do any thing, must be the apprehension and expectation of some good from the thing which he is about to do: and that which naturally keeps a man from doing of a thing must be the apprehension and fear of some mischief likely to ensue from that thing or action that he is ready to engage in. But now, for a man to do a thing, while his conscience, the best light that he has to judge by, assures him that he shall be infinitely, unsupportably miserable, if he does it; this is certainly unnatural and, one would imagine, impossible.

And therefore, so far as one may judge, while a man acts against his conscience, he acts by a principle of direct infidelity, and does not really believe that those things that God has thus threatened shall ever come to pass. For, though he may yield a ge-

neral, faint assent to the truth of those propositions, as they stand recorded in scripture; yet, for a thorough, practical belief, that those general propositions shall be particularly made good upon his person, no doubt, for the time that he is sinning against conscience, such a belief has no place in his mind. Which being so, it is easy to conceive how ready and disposed this must needs leave the soul to admit of any, even the most horrid, unnatural proposals that the devil himself can suggest: for conscience being once extinct, and the Spirit of God withdrawn, (which never stays with a man, when conscience has once left him,) the soul, like the first matter to all forms, has an universal propensity to all lewdness. For every violation of conscience proportionably wears off something of its native tenderness; which tenderness being the cause of that anguish and remorse that it feels upon the commission of sin, it follows, that when, by degrees, it comes to have worn off all this tenderness, the sinner will find no trouble of mind upon his doing the very wickedest and worst of actions; and consequently, that this is the most direct and effectual introduction to all sorts and degrees of sin.

For which reason it was, that I alleged sinning against conscience for one of the causes of this vile temper and habit of mind, which we are now discoursing of: not that it has any special productive efficiency of this particular sort of sinning, more than of any other, but that it is a general cause of this, as of all other great vices; and that it is impossible but a man must have first passed this notable stage, and got his conscience throughly debauched and hardened,

before he can arrive to the height of sin; which I account the delighting in other men's sins to be.

3dly, A third cause of this villainous disposition of mind, besides a man's personal commission of such and such sins, and his commission of them against conscience, must be also his continuance in them. For God forbid that every single commission of a sin, though great for its kind, and withal acted against conscience for its aggravation, should so far deprave the soul, and bring it to such a reprobate sense and condition, as to *take pleasure in other men's sins*. For we know what a foul sin David committed, and what a crime St. Peter himself fell into; both of them, no doubt, fully and clearly against the dictates of their conscience; yet we do not find, that either of them was thereby brought to such an impious frame of heart, as to delight in their own sins, and much less in other men's. And therefore it is not every sinful violation of conscience, that can *quench the Spirit*, to such a degree as we have been speaking of; but it must be a long, inveterate course and custom of sinning after this manner, that at length produces and ends in such a cursed effect. For this is so great a masterpiece in sin, that no man begins with it: he must have passed his *tyrocinium*, or novitiate, in sinning, before he can come to this, be he never so quick a proficient. No man can mount so fast, as to set his foot upon the highest step of the ladder at first. Before a man can come to be pleased with a sin, because he sees his neighbour commit it, he must have had such a long acquaintance with it himself, as to create a kind of intimacy or friendship between him and that; and

then, we know, a man is naturally glad to see his old friend, not only at his own house, but wheresoever he meets him. It is generally the property of an old sinner, to find a delight in reviewing his own villainies in the practice of other men; to see his sin and himself, as it were, in reversion; and to find a greater satisfaction in beholding him who succeeds him in his vice, than him who is to succeed him in his estate. In the matter of sin, age makes a greater change upon the soul, than it does or can upon the body. And as in this, if we compare the picture of a man, drawn at the years of seventeen or eighteen, with a picture of the same person at threescore and ten, hardly the least trace or similitude of one face can be found in the other. So for the soul, the difference of the dispositions and qualities of the inner man will be found much greater. Compare the harmlessness, the credulity, the tenderness, the modesty, and the ingenuous pliableness to virtuous counsels, which is in youth, as it comes fresh and untainted out of the hands of nature, with the mischievousness, the slyness, the craft, the impudence, the falsehood, and the confirmed obstinacy in most sorts of sin, that is to be found in an aged, long-practised sinner, and you will confess the complexion and hue of his soul to be altered more than that of his face. Age has given him another body, and custom another mind. All those seeds of virtue and good morality, that were the natural endowments of our first years, are lost, and dead for ever. And in respect of the native innocence of childhood, no man, through old age, becomes twice a child. The vices of old age have in them the stiffness of it too. And as

it is the unfittest time to learn in, so the unfitness of it to unlearn will be found much greater.

Which considerations, joined with that of its imbecility, make it the proper season for a superannuated sinner to enjoy the delights of sin in the rebound; and to supply the impotence of practice by the airy, phantastic pleasure of memory and reflection. For all that can be allowed him now, is to refresh his decrepit effete sensuality with the transcript and history of his former life, recognised, and read over by him, in the vicious rants of the vigorous youthful debauches of the present time, whom (with an odd kind of passion, mixed of pleasure and envy too) he sees flourishing in all the bravery and prime of their age and vice. An old wrestler loves to look on, and to be near the lists, though feebleness will not let him offer at the prize. An old huntsman finds a music in the noise of hounds, though he cannot follow the chase. An old drunkard loves a tavern, though he cannot go to it, but as he is supported, and led by another, just as some are observed to come from thence. And an old wanton will be doating upon women, when he can scarce see them without spectacles. And to shew the true love and faithful allegiance that the old servants and subjects of vice ever after bear to it, nothing is more usual and frequent, than to hear that such as have been strumpets in their youth, turn procurers in their age. Their great concern is, that the vice may still go on.

4thly, A fourth cause of men's taking pleasure in the sins of others, is from that meanness and poor spiritedness that naturally and inseparably accom-

panies all guilt. Whosoever is conscious to himself of sin, feels in himself (whether he will own it or no) a proportionable shame, and a secret depression of spirit thereupon. And this is so irksome, and uneasy to man's mind, that he is restless to relieve and rid himself from it: for which, he finds no way so effectual, as to get company in the same sin. For company, in any action, gives both credit to that, and countenance to the agent; and so much as the sinner gets of this, so much he casts off of shame. Singularity in sin puts it out of fashion; since to be alone in any practice, seems to make the judgment of the world against it; but the concurrence of others is a tacit approbation of that, in which they concur. Solitude is a kind of nakedness, and the result of that, we know, is shame. It is company only that can bear a man out in an ill thing; and he who is to encounter and fight the law, will be sure to need a second. No wonder therefore if some take delight in the immoralities and baseness of others; for nothing can support their minds drooping, and sneaking, and inwardly reproaching them, from a sense of their own guilt, but to see others as bad as themselves.

To be vicious amongst the virtuous, is a double disgrace and misery; but where the whole company is vicious and debauched, they presently like, or at least easily pardon one another. And as it is observed by some, that there is none so homely, but loves a looking-glass; so it is certain, that there is no man so vicious, but delights to see the image of his vice reflected upon him, from one who exceeds, or at least equals him in the same.

Sin in itself is not only shameful, but also weak;

and it seeks a remedy for both in society: for it is this that must give it both colour and support. But on the contrary, how great and (as I may so speak) how self-sufficient a thing is virtue! It needs no credit from abroad, no countenance from the multitude. Were there but one virtuous man in the world, he would hold up his head with confidence and honour; he would shame the world, and not the world him. For, according to that excellent and great saying, Prov. xiv. 14. *A good man shall be satisfied from himself.* He needs look no further. But if he desires to see the same virtue propagated and diffused to those about him, it is for their sakes, not his own. It is his charity that wishes, and not his necessity that requires it. For solitude and singularity can neither daunt nor disgrace him; unless we could suppose it a disgrace for a man to be singularly good.

But a vicious person, like the basest sort of beasts, never enjoys himself but in the herd. Company, he thinks, lessens the shame of vice, by sharing it; and abates the torrent of a common odium, by deriving it into many channels; and therefore, if he cannot wholly avoid the eye of the observer, he hopes to distract it at least by a multiplicity of the object. These, I confess, are poor shifts, and miserable shelters, for a sick and a self-upbraiding conscience to fly to; and yet they are some of the best that the debauchee has to cheer up his spirits with in this world. For if, after all, he must needs be seen, and took notice of, with all his filth and noisomeness about him, he promises himself however, that it will be some allay to his reproach, to be but one of many, to march in a troop, and by a prepos-

terous kind of ambition, to be seen in bad company.

5. The fifth and last cause, (that I shall mention,) inducing men to take pleasure in the sins of others, is a certain, peculiar, unaccountable malignity, that is in some natures and dispositions. I know no other name or word to express it by. But the thing itself is frequently seen in the temporal concerns of this world. For are there not some who find an inward, secret rejoicing in themselves, when they see or hear of the loss or calamity of their neighbour, though no imaginable interest or advantage of their own is or can be served thereby? But, it seems, there is a base, wolfish principle within, that is fed and gratified with another's misery; and no other account or reason in the world can be given of its being so, but that it is the nature of the beast to delight in such things.

And as this occurs frequently in temporals, so there is no doubt, but that with some few persons it acts the same way also in spirituals. I say, with some few persons; for, thanks be to God, the common, known corruption of human nature, upon the bare stock of its original depravation, does not usually proceed so far. Such an one, for instance, was that wretch, who made a poor captive renounce his religion, in order to the saving of his life; and when he had so done, presently run him through, glorying that he had thereby destroyed his enemy, both body and soul. But more remarkably such, was that monster of diabolical baseness here in England, who, some years since, in the reign of king Charles the first, suffered death for crimes scarce ever heard of before; having frequently boasted,

that as several men had their several pleasures and recreations, so his peculiar pleasure and recreation was to destroy souls, and accordingly to put men upon such practices as he knew would assuredly do it. But above all, the late saying of some of the dissenting brotherhood ought to be proclaimed and celebrated to their eternal honour; who, while there was another new oath preparing, which they both supposed and hoped most of the clergy would not take, in a most insulting manner gave out thereupon, that they were resolved either to have our livings, or to damn our souls. An expression, so fraught with all the spite and poison which the devil himself could infuse into words, that it ought to remain as a monument of the humanity, charity, and christianity of this sort of men for ever.

Now such a temper or principle as these and the like passages do import, I call a peculiar malignity of nature; since it is evident, that neither the inveterate love of vice, nor yet the long practice of it, and that even against the reluctancies and light of conscience, can of itself have this devilish effect upon the mind, but as it falls in with such a villainous preternatural disposition as I have mentioned. For to instance in the particular case of parents and children, let a father be never so vicious, yet, generally speaking, he would not have his child so. Nay, it is certain, that some, who have been as corrupt in their morals as vice could make them, have yet been infinitely solicitous to have their children soberly, virtuously, and piously brought up: so that, although they have *begot sons after their own likeness*, yet they are not willing to breed them so too.

Which, by the way, is the most pregnant demonstration in the world, of that self-condemning sentence, that is perpetually sounding in every great sinner's breast; and of that inward, grating dislike of the very thing he practises, that he should abhor to see the same in any one, whose good he nearly tenders, and whose person he wishes well to. But if now, on the other side, we should chance to find a father corrupting his son, or a mother debauching her daughter, as (God knows such monsters have been seen within the four seas) we must not charge this barely upon an high predominance of vice in these persons, but much more upon a peculiar anomaly and baseness of nature: if the name of nature may be allowed to that which seems to be an utter cashiering of it; a deviation from, and a contradiction to, the common principles of humanity. For this is such a disposition, as strips the father of the man; as makes him sacrifice his children to Moloch; and as much outdo the cruelty of a cannibal or a Saturn, as it is more barbarous and unhuman to damn a child than to devour him. We sometimes read and hear of monstrous births, but we may often see a greater monstrosity in educations: thus when a father has begot a man, he trains him up into a beast, making even his own house a stews, a bordel, and a school of lewdness, to instill the rudiments of vice into the unwary, flexible years of his poor children, poisoning their tender minds with the irresistible, authentic venom of his base example; so that all the instruction they find within their father's walls shall be only to be disciplined to an earlier practice of sin, to be catechized into all the mysteries of iniquity, and, at length, confirmed in a mature,

grown up, incorrigible state of debauchery. And this some parents call a teaching their children to know the world, and to study men: thus leading them, as it were, by the hand, through all the forms and classes, all the varieties and modes of villainy, till at length they make them ten times more the children of the devil, than of themselves. Now, I say, if the unparalleled wickedness of the age should at any time cast us upon such blemishes of mankind as these, who, while they thus treat their children, should abuse and usurp the name of parents, by assuming it to themselves; let us not call them by the low, diminutive term or title of sinful, wicked, or ungodly men; but let us look upon them as so many prodigious exceptions from our common nature, as so many portentous animals, like the strange unnatural productions of Africa, and fit to be publicly shewn, were they not unfit to be seen: for certainly where a child finds his own parents his perverters, he cannot be so properly said to be born, as to be damned into the world; and better were it for him by far to have been unborn, and unbegot, than to come to ask blessing of those whose conversation breathes nothing but contagion and a curse. So impossible, and so much a paradox is it, for any parent to impart to his child his blessing and his vice too.

And thus I have despatched the first general thing proposed for the handling of the words, and shewn in five several particulars, what it is that brings a man to such a disposition of mind, as to take pleasure in other men's sins. I proceed now to the

Second, which is, To shew the reasons why a man's being disposed to do so, comes to be attended with

such an extraordinary guilt. And the first shall be taken from this, that naturally there is no motive to induce or tempt a man to this way of sinning. And this is a most certain truth, that the lesser the temptation is, the greater is the sin. For in every sin, by how much the more free the will is in its choice, by so much is the act the more sinful. And where there is nothing to importune, urge, or provoke it to any act, there is so much an higher and perfecter degree of freedom about that act. For albeit the will is not capable of being compelled to any of its actings, yet it is capable of being made to act with more or less difficulty, according to the different impressions it receives from motives or objects. If the object be extremely pleasing, and apt to gratify it; there, though the will has still a power of refusing it, yet it is not without some difficulty: upon which account it is, that men are so strongly carried out to, and so hardly took off from, the practice of vice; namely, because the sensual pleasure arising from it is still importuning and drawing them to it.

But now, from whence springs this pleasure? Is it not from the gratification of some desire founded in nature? An irregular gratification it is indeed very often; yet still the foundation of it is, and must be, something natural: so that the sum of all is this, that the naturalness of a desire is the cause that the satisfaction of it is pleasure, and pleasure importunes the will; and that which importunes the will, puts a difficulty in the will's refusing or forbearing it. Thus drunkenness is an irregular satisfaction of the appetite of thirst; uncleanness an unlawful gratification of the appetite of procreation; and covetousness

a boundless, unreasonable pursuit of the principle of self-preservation. So that all these are founded in some natural desire, and are therefore pleasurable, and upon that account tempt, solicit, and entice the will. In a word, there is hardly any one vice or sin of direct and personal commission, but what is the irregularity and abuse of one of those two grand natural principles; namely, either that which inclines a man to preserve himself, or that which inclines him to please himself.

But now, what principle, faculty, or desire, by which nature projects either its own pleasure or preservation, is or can be gratified by another man's personal pursuit of his own vice? It is evident, that all the pleasure that naturally can be received from a vicious action, can immediately and personally affect none but him who does it; for it is an application of the pleasing object only to his own sense; and no man feels by another man's senses. And therefore the delight that a man takes from another's sin, can be nothing else but a fantastical, preternatural complacency arising from that which he has really no sense or feeling of. It is properly a love of vice, as such; a delighting in sin for its own sake; and is a direct imitation, or rather an exemplification of the malice of the devil; who delights in seeing those sins committed, which the very condition of his nature renders him uncapable of committing himself. For the devil can neither drink, nor whore, nor play the epicure, though he enjoys the pleasures of all these at a second hand, and by malicious approbation. If a man plays the thief, says Solomon, *and steals to satisfy his hunger*, Prov. vi. 30. though it cannot wholly excuse the

fact, yet it sometimes extenuates the guilt. And we know there are some corrupt affections in the soul of man, that urge and push him on to their satisfaction, with such an impetuous fury, that when we see a man overborne and run down by them, considering the frailty of human nature, we cannot but pity the person, while we abhor the crime. It being like one ready to drink poison, rather than to die with thirst.

But when a man shall, with a sober, sedate, diabolical rancour, look upon and enjoy himself in the sight of his neighbour's sin and shame, and secretly hug himself upon the ruins of his brother's virtue, and the dishonours of his reason, can he plead the instigation of any appetite in nature inclining him to this; and that would otherwise render him uneasy to himself, should he not thus triumph in another's folly and confusion? No, certainly; this cannot be so much as pretended. For he may as well carry his eyes in another man's head, and run races with another man's feet, as directly and naturally taste the pleasures that spring from the gratification of another man's appetites.

Nor can that person, whosoever he is, who accounts it his recreation and diversion to see one man wallowing in his filthy revels, and another made infamous and noisome by his sensuality, be so impudent as to allege for a reason of his so doing, that either all the enormous draughts of the one, do or can leave the least relish upon the tip of his tongue; or that all the fornications and whoredoms of the other, do or can quench or cool the boilings of his own lust. No, this is impossible. And if so, what can we then assign for the cause of this monstrous

disposition? Why, all that can be said in this case is, that nature proceeds by quite another method; having given men such and such appetites, and allotted to each of them their respective pleasures; the appetite and the pleasure still cohabiting in the same subject: but the devil and long custom of sinning have superinduced upon the soul new, unnatural, and absurd desires; desires that have no real object; desires that relish things not at all desirable; but, like the sickness and distemper of the soul, feeding only upon filth and corruption, fire and brimstone, and giving a man the devil's nature and the devil's delight; who has no other joy or happiness, but to dishonour his Maker, and to destroy his fellow-creature; to corrupt him here, and to torment him hereafter. In fine, there is as much difference between the pleasure a man takes in his own sins, and that which he takes in other men's, as there is between the wickedness of a man, and the wickedness of a devil.

2. A second reason why a man's taking pleasure in the sins of others comes to be attended with such an extraordinary guilt, is, from the boundless, unlimited nature of this way of sinning. For by this a man contracts a kind of an universal guilt, and, as it were, sins over the sins of all other men; so that while the act is theirs, the guilt of it is equally his. Consider any man as to his personal powers and opportunities of sinning, and comparatively they are not great; for at greatest they must still be limited by the measure of a man's acting, and the term of his duration. And a man's active powers are but weak, and his continuance in the world but short. So that nature is not sufficient to keep pace with

his corruptions, by answering desire with proportionable practice.

For to instance in those two grand extravagances of lust and drunkenness: surely no man is of so general and diffusive a lust, as to prosecute his amours all the world over; and let it burn never so outrageously for the present, yet age will in time chill those heats; and the impure flame will either die of itself, or consume the body that harbours it. And so for intemperance in drinking; no man can be so much a swine, as to be always pouring in, but in the compass of some years he will drown his health and his strength in his own belly; and after all his drunken trophies, at length drink down himself too; and that certainly will and must put an end to the debauch.

But now, for the way of sinning which we have been speaking of, it is neither confined by place, nor weakened by age; but the bed-rid, the gouty, and the lethargic, may, upon this account, equal the activity of the strongest and the most vegete sinner. Such an one may take his brother by the throat, and act the murderer, even while he can neither stir an hand nor a foot; and he may invade his neighbour's bed, while weakness has tied him down to his own. He may sin over all the adulteries and debauches, all the frauds and oppressions of the whole neighbourhood, and, as I may so speak, he may break every command of God's law by proxy, and it were well for him if he could be damned by proxy too. A man, by delight and fancy, may grasp in the sins of all countries and ages, and by an inward liking of them communicate in their guilt. He may take a range all the world over, and draw in all that wide

circumference of sin and vice, and center it in his own breast. For whatsoever sin a man extremely loves, and would commit if he had opportunity, and, in the mean time, pleases himself with the speculation of the same, whether ever he commits it or no, it leaves a stain and a guilt upon his conscience; and, according to the spiritual and severe accounts of the law, is made, in a great respect, his own. So that by this means there is a kind of transmigration of sins, much like that which Pythagoras held of souls. Such an one to be sure it is, as makes a man not only (according to the apostle's phrase) a *partaker of other men's sins*, but also a deriver of the whole entire guilt of them to himself; and yet so as to leave the committer of them as full of guilt as he was before.

From whence we see the infinitely fruitful and productive power of this way of sinning; how it can increase and multiply beyond all bounds and measures of actual commission, and how vastly it swells the sinner's account in an instant. So that a man shall, out of all the various, and even numberless kinds of villainy, acted by all the people and nations round about him, as it were, extract one mighty, comprehensive guilt, and adopt it to himself; and so become chargeable with, and accountable for, a world of sin without a figure.

3. The third and last reason that I shall assign, of the extraordinary guilt attending a man's being disposed to take pleasure in other men's sins, shall be taken from the soul's preparation and passage to such a disposition. For that it presupposes and includes in it the guilt of many preceding sins. For, as it has been shown, a man must have passed

many periods of sin, before he can arrive to it; and have served a long apprenticeship to the devil, before he can come to such a perfection and maturity in vice, as this imports. It is a collection of the guilt of a long and numerous train of villainies, the compendium and sum total of several particular impieties, all united and cast up into one. It is, as it were, the very quintessence and sublimation of vice, by which, as in the spirit of liquors, the malignity of many actions is contracted into a little compass, but with a greater advantage of strength and force, by such a contraction.

In a word, it is the wickedness of a whole life, discharging all its filth and foulness into this one quality, as into a great sink or common shore. So that nothing is or can be so properly and significantly called the *very sinfulness of sin*, as this. And therefore no wonder, if, containing so many years guilt in the bowels of it, it stands here stigmatized by the apostle, as a temper of mind, rendering men so detestably bad, that the great enemy of mankind, the devil himself, neither can nor desires to make them worse. I cannot, I need not say any more of it. It is indeed a condition, not to be thought of (by persons serious enough to think and consider) without the utmost horror. But such as truly fear God, shall both be kept from it, and from those sins that lead to it.

To which God, infinitely wise, holy, and just, be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

THE

SECOND SERMON

PREACHED UPON

ROMANS I. 32.

Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

THE sense of these words I shew, in the preceding discourse, fell naturally into this one proposition: *viz.*

That the guilt arising from a man's delighting or taking pleasure in other men's sins, or (which is all one) in other men for their sins, is greater than he can possibly contract by a commission of the same sins in his own person.

The prosecution of which I stated upon these three things.

First, To shew what it is that brings a man to such a disposition of mind, as to take pleasure in other men's sins.

Secondly, To shew the reasons why a man's being disposed to do so, comes to be attended with such an extraordinary guilt.

Thirdly and lastly, To declare what kind of persons are to be reckoned under this character.

The two first of which being despatched already, I proceed now to the third and last. Concerning which, I shall lay down this general assertion; That

whosoever draws others to sin, ought to be looked upon as one delighting in those sins that he draws them to. Forasmuch as no man is brought to do any thing, especially if it be ill or wicked, but in order to the pleasing of himself by it: it being absurd and incredible, that any one should venture to damn himself hereafter, for that which does not some way or other gratify and please him here. But to draw forth this general into particulars.

1. First of all: Those are to be accounted to take pleasure in other men's sins, who teach doctrines directly tending to engage such as believe them in a sinful course. For there is none so compendious and efficacious a way to prepare a man for all sin, as this: this being properly to put out the eyes of that which is to be his guide, by perverting his judgment; and when that is once done, you may carry him whither you will. Chance must be his rule, and present appetite his director. A man's judgment or conscience is the great spring of all his actions; and consequently to corrupt or pervert this, is to derive a contagion upon all that he does. And therefore we see how high a guilt our Saviour charges upon this in Matt. v. 19. *Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven:* that is, in truth shall never come thither. And we find the great sin of the Pharisees was, that they promoted and abetted the sins of other men, taught the devil's doctrine out of Moses's chair, and by false descants upon the divine precepts, cut asunder the binding force of them: so that, according to their wretched comments, men might break the law, and yet never sin against it.

For in Matt. xv. 5, 6. they had taught men how *to dishonour their parents*, without any violation of the fifth commandment. Thus they preached: and what design can any one imagine the authors of such doctrines could have, but the depravation of men's manners! For, if some men teach wicked things, it must be that others should practise them. And if one man sets another a copy, it is no doubt with a purpose that he should write after it.

Now these doctrines are of two sorts.

1. Such as represent actions, that are in themselves really wicked and sinful, as not so.

2. Such as represent them much less sinful as to their kind or degrees, than indeed they are.

For the first of which; to instance in one very gross one, instead of many, take the doctrine of those commonly called Antinomians, who assert positively, that believers, or persons regenerate, and within the covenant of grace, cannot sin. Upon which account, no wonder if some very liberally assume to themselves the condition and character of believers; for then they know that other mighty privilege belongs to them of course. But what? may not these believers cheat and lie, commit adultery, steal, murder, and rebel? Why, yes; they may, and nothing is more common than to see such believers do such things. But how then can they escape the charge of all that guilt that naturally follows from such enormities? Why, thus; you must in this case with great care and accuracy distinguish between the act of lying and the sin of lying, the act of stealing and the sin of stealing, and the act of rebellion and the sin of rebellion. Now, though all these acts are frequent and usual with such persons,

yet they are sure (as they order the matter) never to be guilty of the sin. And the reason is, because it is not the quality of the action that derives a qualification upon the person, so as to render him such or such, good or bad; but it is the antecedent quality or condition of the person that denominates his actions, and stamps them good or evil. So that they are those only who are first wicked, that do wicked actions. But believers, and the godly, though they do the very same things, yet they so much outwit the devil in the doing of them, that they never commit the same sins. But you will say, how came they by such a great and strange privilege? Why, they will tell you, it is because they are not under the obliging power of the law. And if you ask further, how they come to get from under that common obligation that lies so hard and heavy upon all the rest of the world; they will tell you, it is from this, that believers, instead of the law, have the Spirit actually dwelling in them, and by an admirable kind of invisible clock-work moving them, just as a spring does a watch; and that immediately by himself alone, without the mediation of any written law or rule to guide, or direct, and much less to command or oblige them. So that the Spirit, we see, is to be their sole director, without, and very often contrary to, the written law. An excellent contrivance, doubtless, to authorize and sanctify the blackest and most flagitious actions that can proceed from man. For since the motions of the Spirit (which they so confidently suppose themselves to have) cannot so much as in things good and lawful, by any certain diagnostic, be distinguished from the

motions of a man's own heart, they very easily make a step further, and even in things unlawful conclude the motions of their own hearts to be the impulse of the Spirit; and this presently alters the whole complexion of an action that would otherwise look but very scurvily; and makes it absolutely pure and unblameable, or rather perfect and meritorious. So that let a man have but impudence and wickedness enough to libel his Maker, and to entitle the Spirit of God to all that he does or desires, surnaming his own inclinations and appetites (though never so irregular and impure) the Holy Ghost; and you may, upon very sure grounds, turn him loose, and bid him sin if he can. And thus much for the first sort of doctrines, which once believed, like the flood-gates of hell pulled up, lets in a deluge and inundation of all sin and vice upon the lives of men. And if this be the natural effect of the doctrines themselves, we cannot in all reason but infer, that the interest of the teachers of them must needs be agreeable.

2. The other sort of doctrines tending to engage such as believe them in a sinful course, are such as represent many sins, much less, as to their kind or degree, than indeed they are. Of which number is that doctrine, that asserts all sins committed by believers, or persons in a state of grace, to be but infirmities. That there are such things as sins of infirmity, in contradistinction to those of presumption, is a truth not to be questioned; but *in hypothesi*, to state exactly which are sins of infirmity, and which are not, is not so easy a work. This is certain, that there is a vast difference between them; indeed, as vast as between inadvertency and deliberation, be-

tween surprise and set purpose: and that persons truly regenerate have sinned this latter way, and consequently may sin so again, is as evident as the story (already referred to by us) of David's murder and adultery: sins acted not only with deliberation, but with artifice, study, and deep contrivance. And can sins, that carry such dismal marks and black symptoms upon them, pass for infirmities? for sins of daily incursion, and such as human frailty, and the very condition of our nature in this world, is so unavoidably liable to, (for so are sins of infirmity,) that *a righteous man may fall into them seven times in a day;* and yet, according to the merciful tenor of the covenant of grace, stand accepted before God as a righteous man still? No, certainly, if such are infirmities, it will be hard to assign what are presumptions. And what a sin-encouraging doctrine that is, that avouches them for such, is sufficiently manifest from hence; that although every sin of infirmity, in its own nature, and according to the strict rigour of the law, merits eternal death; yet it is certain from the gospel, that no man shall actually suffer eternal death barely for sins of infirmity: which being so, persuade but a man that a regenerate person may cheat and lie, steal, murder, and rebel, by way of infirmity, and at the same time you persuade him also, that he may do all this without any danger of damnation. And then, since these are oftentimes such desirable privileges to flesh and blood; and since withal, every man by nature is so very prone to think the best of himself and of his own condition; it is odds but he will find a shrewd temptation to believe himself regenerate, rather than forbear a pleasurable or a profitable sin,

by thinking that he shall go to hell for committing it. Now this being such a direct manuduction to all kind of sin, by abusing the conscience with undervaluing persuasions concerning the malignity and guilt even of the foulest; it is evident, that such as teach and promote the belief of such doctrines, are to be looked upon as the devil's prophets and apostles; and there is no doubt, but the guilt of every sin, that either from pulpit, or from press, they influence men to the commission of, does as certainly rest upon them, and will one day be as severely exacted of them, as if they had actually and personally committed it themselves.

And thus I have instanced in two notable doctrines, that may justly be looked upon as the general inlets, or two great gates, through which all vice and villainy rush in upon the manners of men professing religion. But the particulars, into which these generals diffuse themselves, you may look for and find in those well-furnished magazines and store-houses of all immorality and baseness, the books and writings of some modern casuists; who, like the devil's amanuenses, and secretaries to the prince of darkness, have published to the world such notions and intrigues of sin out of his cabinet, as neither the wit or wickedness of man, upon the bare natural stock either of invention or corruption, could ever have found out.

The writings, both of the Old and New Testament, make it very difficult for a man to be saved; but the writings of these men make it more difficult, if not impossible, for any one to be damned: for where there is no sin, there can be no damnation. And as these men have obscured and confounded

the natures and properties of things by their false principles and wretched sophistry, though an act be never so sinful, they will be sure to strip it of its guilt; and to make the very law and rule of action so pliable and bending, that it shall be impossible to be broke. So that he who goes to hell must pass through a narrower gate than that which the gospel says leads to heaven. For that, we are told, is only strait, but this is absolutely shut; and so shut that sin cannot pass it, and therefore it is much if a sinner should.

So insufferably have these impostors poisoned the fountains of morality, perverted and embased the very standard and distinguishing rule of good and evil. So that all their books and writings are but debauchery upon record, and impiety registered and consigned over to posterity.

In every volume there is a nursery and plantation of vice, where it is sure to thrive, and from thence to be transplanted into men's practice. For here it is manured with art and argument, sheltered with fallacy and distinction, and thereby enabled both to annoy others and to defend itself.

And to shew how far the malignity of this way of sinning reaches; he, who has vented a pernicious doctrine, or published an ill book, must know that his guilt and his life determine not together: no, such an one, as the apostle says, *being dead, yet speaketh;* he sins in his very grave, corrupts others while he is rotting himself, and has a growing account in the other world after he has paid nature's last debt in this; and, in a word, quits this life like a man carried off by the plague; who, though he

dies himself, yet does execution upon others by a surviving infection.

2. Such also are to be reckoned to take pleasure in other men's sins, as endeavour by all means to allure men to sin; and that either by formal persuasion, importunity, or desire, as we find the harlot described, enticing the young man, in Prov. vii. from ver. 13 to 22; or else by administering objects and occasions fit to inflame and draw forth a man's corrupt affections; such as are the drinking of a choleric or revengeful person into a fit of rage and violence against the person of his neighbour; thus heating one man's blood, in order to the shedding of another's. Such also as the provoking of a lustful, incontinent person, by filthy discourse, wanton books and pictures, and, that which equals and exceeds them all, the incentives of the stage; till a man's vice and folly works over all bounds, and grows at length too mad and outrageous to be either governed or concealed.

Now with great variety of such kind of traders for hell as these, has the nation of late years abounded. Wretches who live upon the shark, and other men's sins, the common poisoners of youth, equally desperate in their fortunes and their manners, and getting their very bread by the damnation of souls. So that if any inexperienced young novice happens into the fatal neighbourhood of such pests, presently they are upon him, plying his full purse and his empty pate with addresses suitable to his vanity; telling him, what pity it is, that one so accomplished for parts and person should smother himself in the country, where he can learn nothing of gallantry or

behaviour; as, how to make his court, to hector a drawer, to cog the die, or storm a whorehouse; but must of necessity live and die ignorant of what it is to trepan or be trepanned, to sup, or rather dine at midnight in a tavern, with the noise of oaths, blasphemies, and fiddlers about his ears, and to fight every watch and constable at his return from thence, and to be beaten by them: but must at length, poor man! die dully of old age at home; when here he might so fashionably and genteelly, long before that time, have been duelled or fluxed into another world.

If this be not the guise and practice of the times, especially as to the principal cities of the kingdom, let any one judge; and whether for such a poor deluded wretch, instead of growing rusty in the country, (as some call it,) to be thus brought by a company of indigent, debauched, soul-and-body-destroying harpies, to lose his estate, family, and virtue, amongst them in the city, be not a much greater violation of the public weal and justice of any government, than most of those crimes that bring the committers of them to the gallows, we may at present easily see, and one day perhaps sadly feel.

Nor is this trade of corrupting the gentry and nobility, and seasoning them with the vices of the great town, as soon as they set foot into it, carried on secretly, and in a corner, but openly, and in the face of the sun; by persons who have formed themselves into companies, or rather corporations. So that a man may as easily know where to find one to teach him to debauch, whore, game, and blaspheme, as to teach him to write or cast accompt: it is their support and business; nay, their very profession and livelihood; getting their living by those

practices, for which they deserve to forfeit their lives.

Now these are another sort of men, who are justly charged with the guilt and character of delighting in other men's sins: men, who are the devil's setters; who contrive, study, and beat their brains how to draw in some poor, innocent, unguarded heir into their hellish net, learning his humour, prying into his circumstances, and observing his weak side; and all this to plant the snare and apply the temptation effectually and successfully; and when by such insinuations they have once got within him, and are able to drill him on from one lewdness to another, by the same arts corrupting and squeezing him as they please; no wonder if they rejoice to see him guilty of all sorts of villainy, and take pleasure in those sins in which they find their profit too.

3. Such as affect the company of infamous and vicious persons, are also to be reckoned in the number of those who take pleasure in such men's vices. For otherwise, what is there in such men which they can pretend to be pleased with? For generally such sots have neither parts nor wit, ingenuity of discourse, nor fineness of conversation, to entertain or delight any one, that, coming into their company, brings but his reason along with him. But, on the contrary, their rude, impertinent loudness, their quarrels, their nastiness, their dull, obscene talk and ribaldry, (which from them you must take for wit, or go without it,) cannot but be very nauseous and offensive to any one who does not balk his own reason, out of love to their vice; and, for the sake of the sin itself, pardon the ugliness of its circumstances: as a father will hug and embrace his beloved son, for all the dirt

and foulness of his clothes; the dearness of the person easily apologizing for the disagreeableness of the habit.

One would think it should be no easy matter to bring any man of sense to love an alehouse; indeed of so much sense, as seeing and smelling amounts to; there being such strong encounters of both, as would quickly send him packing, did not the love of good fellowship reconcile him to these nuisances, and the deity he adored compound for the homelines of its shrine.

It is clear therefore, that where a man can like and love the conversation of lewd, debauched persons, amidst all the natural grounds and motives of loathing and dislike; it can proceed from nothing but the inward affection he bears to their lewd, debauched humour. It is this that he enjoys, and, for the sake of this, the rest he endures.

4thly and lastly, Such as encourage, countenance, and support men in their sins, are to be reckoned in the number of those who take pleasure in other men's sins. Now this may be done two ways.

First, By commendation. Concerning which, we may take this for granted; that no man commends another any further than he likes him: for indeed to commend any one, is to vouch him to the world, to undertake for his worth, and, in a word, to own the thing which he is chiefly remarkable for. He who writes an *encomium Neronis*, if he does it heartily is himself but a transcript of Nero in his mind; and would, no doubt, gladly enough see such pranks, as he was famous for, acted again, though he dares not be the actor of them himself.

From whence we see the reason of some men's

giving such honourable names and appellations to the worst of men and actions, and base, reproachful titles to the best: such as are calling faction, and a spitting in their prince's face, *petitioning;* fanaticism and schism, *true protestantism;* sacrilege and rapine, *thorough reformation*, and the like. As, on the contrary, branding conformity to the rules and rites of the best church in the world, with the false and odious name of *formality;* and traducing all religious, conscientious observers of them, as *mungrel Protestants*, and *Papists in masquerade.* And indeed many are and have been called Papists of late years, whom those very persons who call them so know to be far from being so. But what then do they mean by fixing such false characters upon men, even against their own consciences? Why, they mean and design this: they would set such a mark upon those whom they hate, as may cause their throats to be cut, and their estates to be seized upon, when the rabble shall be let loose upon the government once again; which such beggarly, malicious fellows impatiently hope and long for.

Though I doubt not (how much soever knaves may abuse fools with words for a time) but there will come a day, in which the most active Papists will be found under the Puritan mask; in which it will appear, that the conventicle has been the Jesuits safest kennel, and the Papists themselves, as well as the fanatics, have been managers of all those monstrous outcries against popery, to the ruin of those Protestants whom they most hate, and whom alone they fear. It being no unheard-of trick for a thief, when he is closely pursued, to cry out, Stop the thief, and thereby diverting the suspicion from him-

self, to get clear away. It is also worth our while to consider with what terms of respect and commendation knaves and sots will speak of their own fraternity. As, What an honest, what a worthy man is such an one! And, What a good-natured person is another! According to which terms, such as are factious, by *worthy men*, mean only such as are of the same faction, and united in the same designs against the government with themselves. And such as are brothers of the pot, by a *good-natured person*, mean only a true, trusty debauchee, who never stands out at a merry-meeting, so long as he is able to stand at all; nor ever refuses an health, while he has enough of his own to pledge it with; and, in a word, is as honest as drunkenness and debauchery, want of sense and reason, virtue and sobriety, can possibly make him.

2dly, The other way by which some men encourage others in their sins is, by preferment. As, when men shall be advanced to places of trust and honour for those qualities that render them unworthy of so much as sober and civil company. When a lord or master shall cast his favours and rewards upon such beasts and blemishes of society, as live only to the dishonour of Him who made them, and the reproach of him who maintains them. None certainly can love to see vice in power, but such as love to see it also in practice. Place and honour do of all things most misbecome it; and a goat or a swine in a chair of state, cannot be more odious than ridiculous.

It is reported of Cæsar, that passing through a certain town, and seeing all the women of it standing at their doors with monkeys in their arms, he

asked, whether the women of that country used to have any children or no? thereby wittily and sarcastically reproaching them for misplacing that affection upon brutes, which could only become a mother to her child. So, when we come into a great family or government, and see this place of honour allotted to a murderer, another filled with an atheist or blasphemer, and a third with a filthy parasite, may we not as appositely and properly ask the question, whether there be any such thing as virtue, sobriety, or religion amongst such a people, with whom vice wears those rewards, honours, and privileges, which in other nations the common judgment of reason awards only to the virtuous, the sober, and religious? And certainly it is too flagrant a demonstration, how much vice is the darling of any people, when many amongst them are preferred for those practices, for which, in other places, they can scarce be pardoned.

And thus I have finished the third and last general thing proposed, for the handling of the words, which was, to shew the several sorts or kinds of men, which fall under the charge and character of taking pleasure in other men's sins.

Now the inferences from the foregoing particulars shall be twofold.

1. Such as concern particular persons; and,

2. Such as concern communities, or bodies of men.

And first for the malignity of such a disposition of mind, as induces a man to delight in other men's sins, with reference to the effects of it upon particular persons. As,

1. It quite alters and depraves the natural frame of a man's heart: for there is that naturally in the heart of man, which abhors sin, as sin; and conse-

quently would make him detest it, both in himself and in others too. The first and most genuine principles of reason are certainly averse to it, and find a secret grief and remorse from every invasion that sin makes upon a man's innocence; and that must needs render the first entrance and admission of sin uneasy, because disagreeable. Yet time, we see, and custom of sinning, can bring a man to such a pass, that it shall be more difficult and grievous to him to part with his sin, than ever it was to him to admit it. It shall get so far into, and lodge itself so deep within, his heart, that it shall be his business and his recreation, his companion and his other self; and the very dividing between his flesh and his bones, or rather, between his body and his soul, shall be less terrible and afflictive to him, than to be took off from his vice.

Nevertheless, as unnatural as this effect of sin is, there is one yet more so: for, that innate principle of self-love, that very easily and often blinds a man, as to any impartial reflection upon himself, yet, for the most part, leaves his eyes open enough to judge truly of the same thing in his neighbour, and to hate that in others, which he allows and cherishes in himself. And therefore, when it shall come to this, that he also approves, embraces, and delights in sin, as he observes it, even in the person and practice of other men; this shews that the man is wholly transformed from the creature that God first made him; nay, that he has consumed those poor remainders of good that the sin of Adam left him; that he has worn off the very remote dispositions and possibilities to virtue; and, in a word, turned grace first, and afterwards nature itself, out of doors. No man

knows, at his first entrance upon any sin, how far it may carry him, and where it will stop; the commission of sin being generally like the pouring out of water, which, when once poured out, knows no other bounds but to run as far as it can.

2dly, A second effect of this disposition of mind is, that it peculiarly indisposes a man to repent, and recover himself from it. For the first step to repentance is a man's dislike of his sin: and how can we expect that a man should conceive any through dislike of that, which has took such an absolute possession of his heart and affections, that he likes and loves it, not only in his own practice, but also in other men's? Nay, that he is pleased with it, though he is past the practice of it. Such a temper of mind is a downright contradiction to repentance; as being founded in the destruction of those qualities which are the only dispositions and preparatives to it. For that natural tenderness of conscience, which must first create in the soul a sense of sin, and from thence produce a sorrow for it, and at length cause a relinquishment of it; that, I say, (we have already shewn,) is took away by a customary, repeated course of sinning against conscience: so that the very first foundation of virtue, which is the natural power of distinguishing between the moral good and evil of any action, is, in effect, plucked up and destroyed; and the Spirit of God finds nothing in the heart of such an one to apply the means of grace to. All taste, relish, and discernment of the suitableness of virtue, and the unsuitableness of vice, being utterly gone from it.

And as this is a direct bar to that part of repentance, which looks back with sorrow and indignation

upon what is past; so is it equally such to that greater part of repentance, which is to look forward, and to prevent sin for the future. For this properly delivers a man up to sin; forasmuch as it leaves his heart destitute of all those principles which should resist it. So that such an one must be as bad as the devil will have him, and can be no better than the devil will let him. In both he must submit to his measures. And what is this but a kind of entrance into, or rather an anticipation of hell? What is it but judgment and damnation already begun? For a man in such a case is as sure of it, as if he were actually in the flames.

3dly, A third effect of this disposition of mind (which also naturally follows from the former) is, that the longer a man lives the wickeder he grows, and his last days are certainly his worst. It has been observed, that to delight in other men's sins was most properly the vice of old age; and we shall also find, that it may be as truly and properly called the old age of vice. For, as first, old age necessarily implies a man's having lived so many years before it comes upon him; and withal, this sort of viciousness supposes the precedent commission of many sins, by which a man arrives to it; so it has this further property of old age: that, as when a man comes once to be old, he never retreats, but still goes on, and grows every day older and older; so when a man comes once to such a degree of wickedness, as to delight in the wickedness of other men, it is more than ten thousand to one odds, if he ever returns to a better mind, but grows every day worse and worse. For he has nothing else to take up his thoughts, and nothing to entertain his desires with;

which, by a long estrangement from better things, come at length perfectly to loathe and fly off from them.

A notable instance of which we have in Tiberius Cæsar, who was bad enough in his youth, but superlatively and monstrously so in his old age: and the reason of this was, because he took a particular pleasure in seeing other men do vile and odious things. So that all his diversion at his beloved Capreæ, was to be a spectator of the devil's actors, representing the worst of vices upon that infamous stage.

And therefore let not men flatter themselves, (as no doubt some do,) that though they find it difficult at present to combat and stand out against an ill practice, and upon that account give way to a continuance in it; yet that old age shall do that for them, which they in their youth could never find in their heart to do for themselves; I say, let not such persons mock and abuse themselves with such false and absurd presumptions. For they must know that an habit may continue, when it is no longer able to act; or rather the elicit, internal acts of it may be quick and vigorous, when the external, imperate acts of the same habit utterly cease: and let men but reflect upon their own observation, and consider impartially with themselves, how few in the world they have known made better by age. Generally they will see, that such leave not their vice, but their vice leaves them; or rather retreats from their practices, and retires into their fancy; and that, we know, is boundless and infinite: and when vice has once settled itself there, it finds a vaster and a wider compass to act in, than ever it had before. I

scarce know any thing that calls for a more serious consideration from us than this: for still men are apt to persuade themselves, that they shall find it an easy matter to grow virtuous as they grow old. But it is a way of arguing highly irrational and fallacious. For this is a maxim of eternal truth; that nothing grows weak with age, but that which will at length die with age; which sin never does. The longer a blot continues, the deeper it sinks. And it will be found a work of no small difficulty to dispossess and throw out a vice from that heart, where long possession begins to plead prescription. It is naturally impossible for an old man to grow young again; and it is next to impossible for a decrepit aged sinner to become a new creature, and *be born again.*

4thly and lastly, We need no other argument of the malign effects of this disposition of mind, than this one consideration, that many perish eternally, who never arrived to such a pitch of wickedness as to take any pleasure in, or indeed to be at all concerned about, the sins of other men. But they perish in the pursuit of their own lusts, and the obedience they personally yield to their own sinful appetites: and that, questionless, very often not without a considerable mixture of inward dislike of themselves for what they do: yet for all that, their sin, we see, proving too hard for them, the overpowering stream carries them away, and down they sink into the bottomless pit, though under the weight of a guilt, by vast degrees inferior to that which we have been discoursing of. For doubtless many men are finally lost, who yet have no men's sins to answer for, but their own: who never en-

ticed nor perverted others to sin, and much less applauded or encouraged them in their sin: but only being slaves to their own corrupt affections, have lived and died under the killing power of them, and so passed to a sad eternity.

But that other devilish way of sinning, hitherto spoken of, is so far beyond this, that this is a kind of innocence, or rather a kind of charity, compared to it. For this is a solitary, single; that a complicated, multiplied guilt. And indeed, if we consider at what a rate some men sin nowadays; that man sins charitably, who damns nobody but himself. But the other sort of sinners, who may properly enough be said to people hell, and, in a very ill sense, to bear the sins of many; as they have a guilt made up of many guilts, so what can they reasonably expect, but a damnation equivalent to many damnations?

And thus much for the first general inference, from the foregoing discourse, shewing the malignity of such a disposition of mind as induces a man to delight in other men's sins, with reference to particular persons.

2dly, The other inference shall be with reference to communities, or bodies of men; and so such a disposition has a most direct and efficacious influence to propagate, multiply, and spread the practice of any sin, till it becomes general and national. For this is most certain, that some men's taking pleasure in other men's sins, will cause many men to sin, to do them a pleasure; and this will appear upon these three accounts. 1. That it is seldom or never that any man comes to such a degree of impiety, as to take pleasure in other men's sins, but he also shews

the world by his actions and behaviour that he does so. 2. That there are few men in the world so inconsiderable, but there are some or other who have an interest to serve by them. And, 3. That the natural course that one man takes to serve his interest by another is, by applying himself to him in such a way as may most gratify and delight him.

Now from these three things put together, it is not only easy, but necessary to infer, that since the generality of men are wholly acted by their present interest, if they find those who can best serve them in this their interest, most likely also to be gained over so to do by the sinful and vile practices of those who address to them; no doubt such practices shall be pursued by such persons, in order to the compassing their desired ends. Where greatness takes no delight in goodness, we may be sure there shall be but little goodness seen in the lives of those who have an interest to serve by such an one's greatness. For take any illustrious, potent sinner, whose power is wholly employed to serve his pleasure, and whose chief pleasure is to see others as bad and wicked as himself; and there is no question but in a little time he will also make them so; and his dependants shall quickly become his proselytes. They shall sacrifice their virtue to his humour, spend their credit and good name, nay, and their very souls too, to serve him; and that by the worst and basest of services, which is, by making themselves like him. It is but too notorious how long vice has reigned, or rather raged amongst us; and with what a bare face and a brazen forehead it walks about the nation, as it were, *elato capite*, and looking down with scorn upon virtue as a contemptible and a mean thing. Vice could not

come to this pitch by chance. But we have sinned apace, and at an higher strain of villainy than the fops our ancestors (as some are pleased to call them) could ever arrive to. So that we daily see maturity and age in vice joined with youth and greenness of years. A manifest argument, no doubt, of the great docility and pregnancy of parts, that is, in the present age, above all the former.

For, in respect of vice, nothing is more usual nowadays, than for boys *illico nasci senes.* They see their betters delight in ill things; they observe reputation and countenance to attend the practice of them; and this carries them on furiously to that, which, of themselves, they are but too much inclined to; and which laws were purposely made by wise men to keep them from. They are glad, you may be sure, to please and prefer themselves at once, and to serve their interest and their sensuality together.

And as they are come to this height and rampancy of vice, in a great measure, from the countenance of their betters and superiors; so they have took some steps higher in the same from this, That the follies and extravagances of the young too frequently carry with them the suffrage and approbation of the old. For age, which naturally and unavoidably is but one remove from death, and consequently should have nothing about it but what looks like a decent preparation for it, scarce ever appears of late days but in the high mode, the flaunting garb, and utmost gaudery of youth; with clothes as ridiculously, and as much in the fashion, as the person that wears them is usually grown out of it. The eldest equal the youngest in the vanity of their dress,

and no other reason can be given of it, but that they equal, if not surpass them in the vanity of their desires. So that those who by the majesty and, as I may so say, the prerogative of their age, should even frown youth into sobriety and better manners, are now striving all they can to imitate and strike in with them, and to be really vicious, that they may be thought to be young.

The sad and apparent truth of which makes it very superfluous to inquire after any further cause of that monstrous increase of vice, that like a torrent, or rather a breaking in of the sea upon us, has of late years overflowed and victoriously carried all before it. Both the honourable and the aged have contributed all they could to the promotion of it; and, so far as they are able, to give the best colour to the worst of things. This they have endeavoured, and thus much they have effected, that men now see that vice makes them acceptable to those who are able to make them considerable. It is the key that lets them into their very heart, and enables them to command all that is there. And if this be the price of favour, and the market of honour, no doubt where the trade is so quick, and withal so certain, multitudes will be sure to follow it.

This is too manifestly our present case. All men see it; and wise and good men lament it: and where vice, pushed on with such mighty advantages, will stop its progress, it is hard to judge: it is certainly above all human remedies to control the prevailing course of it; unless the great Governor of the world, who quells the rage and swelling of the sea, and sets bars and doors to it, beyond which the proudest of its waves cannot pass, shall, in his infinite

compassion to us, do the same to that ocean of vice, which now swells, and roars, and lifts up itself above all banks and bounds of human laws; and so, by his omnipotent word, reducing its power, and abasing its pride, shall at length say to it, *Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further.* Which God in his good time effect.

To whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

Natural Religion, without Revelation, shewn only sufficient to render a Sinner inexcusable:

IN

A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY,

AT CHRIST-CHURCH, OXON,

Nov. 2, 1690.

Rom. i. 20.

—— *So that they are without excuse.*

THIS excellent epistle, though in the front of it it bears a particular inscription, yet, in the drift and purpose of it, is universal; as designing to convince all mankind (whom it supposes in pursuit of true happiness) of the necessity of seeking for it in the Gospel, and the impossibility of finding it elsewhere. All without the church, at that time, were comprehended under the division of Jews and Gentiles, called here by the apostle, Greeks; the nobler and more noted part being used for the whole. Accordingly, from the second chapter, down along, he addresses himself to the Jews, shewing the insufficiency of their law to justify, or make them happy, how much soever they doated upon it. But here, in this first chapter, he deals with the Greeks, or

Gentiles, who sought for and promised themselves the same happiness from the dictates of right reason, which the Jews did from the Mosaic law. Where, after he had took an account of what their bare reason had taught them in the things of God, and compared the superstructure with the foundation, their practice with their knowledge, he finds them so far from arriving at the happiness which they aspired to by this means, that upon a full survey of the whole matter, the result of all comes to this sad and deplorable issue, that they were sinful and miserable, and that without excuse. In the words, taken with the coherence of the precedent and subsequent verses, we have these four things considerable.

I. The sin here followed upon a certain sort of men, with this so severe a judgment; namely, that *knowing God, they did not glorify him as God*, ver. 21.

II. The persons guilty of this sin; they were *such as professed themselves wise*, ver. 22.

III. The cause or reason of their falling into this sin; which was their *holding the truth in unrighteousness*, ver. 18. And,

IV. and lastly, The judgment, or rather the state and condition, penally consequent upon these sinners; namely, that *they were without excuse*, ver. 20.

Of each of which in their order: and first, for the first of them.

The sin here followed with so severe a judgment, and so highly aggravated, and condemned by the apostle, is, by the united testimony of most divines upon this place, the sin of idolatry: which the apostle affirms to consist in this; *That the Gentiles*

glorified not God, as God. Which general charge he also draws forth into particulars; as, that they *changed his glory into the similitude and images of men, and beasts, and birds;* where, by glory, he means God's worship, to wit, that by which men glorify him, and not the essential glory of his nature; it being such a glory, as was in men's power to change and to debase; and therefore must needs consist, either in those actions, or those means, which they performed the divine worship by. I know no place, from which we may more clearly gather what the scripture accounts idolatry, than from this chapter. From whence, that I may represent to you what idolatry is, and wherein one sort of it, at least, does consist, you may observe, that the persons who are here charged with it are positively affirmed to have known and acknowledged the true God. For it is said of them, that they knew his *eternal power and godhead,* in this twentieth verse; nay, and they worshipped him too. From whence this undeniably and invincibly follows, that they did not look upon those images, which they addressed to, as gods, nor as things in which the divine nature did or could inclose itself; nor, consequently, to which they gave, or ultimately designed their religious worship. This conclusion therefore I infer, and assert, that idolatry is not only an accounting or worshipping that for God which is not God, but it is also a worshipping the true God in a way wholly unsuitable to his nature; and particularly by the mediation of images and corporeal resemblances of him. This is idolatry: for the persons here spoken of, pretended to glorify the true God, but *they did not glorify him as God,* and upon

that account stand arraigned for idolaters. Common sense and experience will and must evince the truth of this. For can any one imagine, that men of reason, who had their senses quick, and their wits and discourse entire, could take that image or statue, which they fell down before, to be a god? Could they think that to be infinite and immense, the ubiquity of which they could thrust into a corner of their closet? Or, could they conceive that to be eternal, which a few days before they had seen a log, or a rude trunk, and perhaps the other piece of it a joint-stool in the workman's shop?

The ground and reason of all worship is, an opinion of power and will in the person worshipped to answer and supply our desires; which he cannot possibly do, unless he first apprehend them. But can any man, who is master of sense himself, believe the rational heathens so void of it, as to think that those images could fulfil the petitions which they could not hear, pity the wants they could not see, do all things when they could not stir an hand or a foot? It is impossible they should; but it is also certain, that they were idolaters.

And therefore it is clear that their idolatry consisted in something else, and the history of it would demonstrate so much, were it proper to turn a sermon into an history. So that we see here, that the sin condemned in the text, was the worshipping of the true God by images. For the defence of which, there is no doubt but they might have pleaded, and did plead for those images, that they used them not as objects, but only as means and instruments of divine worship, not as what they worshipped, but as that, by which they directed their worship to

God. Though still, methinks it is something hard to conceive, that none of the worship should fall upon the image by the way, or that the water can be conveyed into the sea, without so much as wetting the channel through which it passes. But however, you see it requires a very distinguishing head, and an even hand, and no small skill in directing the intention, to carry a prayer quite through to its journey's end: though, after all, the mischief of it is, that the distinction, which looks sō fine in the theory, generally miscarries in the practice; especially where the ignorant vulgar are the practisers, who are the worst in the world at distinguishing, but yet make far the greatest part of mankind, and are as much concerned and obliged to pray, as the wisest and the best; but withal, infinitely unhappy, if they cannot perform a necessary duty without school-distinctions, nor beg their daily bread without metaphysics. And thus much for the first thing proposed; namely, the sin here spoken against by the apostle in the text; which was idolatry.

2. The second is the persons charged with this sin. And they were not the Gnosticks, as some whimsically imagine, who can never meet with the words γινώσκοντες, γινώσκειν, γνῶσις, or γνωστὸν, but presently the Gnosticks must be drawn in by the head and shoulders; but the persons here meant were plainly and manifestly the old heathen philosophers; such as not only in the apostles, but also in their own phrase, *professed themselves to be wise.* Their great title was σοφοὶ, and the word of applause still given to their lectures was σοφῶς. And Pythagoras was the first who abated of the invidiousness of

the name, and from σοφὸς brought it down to φιλόσοφος, from a master to a lover of wisdom, from a professor to a candidate.

These were the men here intended by St. Paul; men famous in their respective ages; the great favourites of nature, and the top and masterpiece of art; men, whose aspiring intellectuals had raised them above the common level, and made them higher by the head than the world round about them. Men of a polite reason, and a notion refined and enlarged by meditation. Such, as with all these advantages of parts and study, had been toiling and plodding many years, to outwit and deceive themselves; sat up many nights, and spent many days to impose a fallacy upon their reason; and, in a word, ran the round of all the arts and sciences to arrive, at length, at a glorious and elaborate folly; even these, I say, these grandees and giants in knowledge, who thus looked down, as it were, upon the rest of mankind, and laughed at all besides themselves, as barbarous and insignificant, (as quick and sagacious as they were to look into the little intrigues of matter and motion, which a man might *salva scientia*, or at least, *salva anima ignorare*,) yet blundered and stumbled about their grand and principal concern, the knowledge of their duty to God, sinking into the meanest and most ridiculous instances of idolatry; even so far, as to worship the great God under the form of *beasts and creeping things;* to adore eternity and immensity in a brute or a plant, or some viler thing; bowing down, in their adoration, to such things as they would scarce otherwise have bowed down to take up. Nay, and to rear temples, and make altars to *fear*, *lust*, and

revenge; there being scarce a corrupt passion of the mind, or a distemper of the body, but what they worshipped. So that it could not be expected, that they should ever repent of those sins which they thought fit to deify, nor mortify those corrupt affections to which they ascribed a kind of divinity and immortality. By all which, they fell into a greater absurdity in matter of practice, than ever any one of them did in point of opinion; (which yet certainly was very hard;) namely, that having confessed a God, and allowed him the perfections of a God, to wit, an infinite power, and an eternal godhead, they yet denied him the worship of God: thus reversing the great truths they had subscribed to in speculation, by a brutish, senseless devotion, managed with a greater prostration of reason than of body.

Had the poor vulgar rout only, who were held under the prejudices and prepossessions of education, been abused into such idolatrous superstitions, as to adore a marble or a golden deity, it might have been detested indeed, or pitied, but not so much to be wondered at: but for the stoa, the academy, or the peripaton to own such a paradox; for an Aristotle or a Plato to think their Νοῦς ἀΐδιος, their eterternal mind or universal spirit, to be found in, or served by, the images of fourfooted beasts; for the Stagirite to recognise his gods in his own book *de Animalibus;* this, as the apostle says, *was without excuse:* and how will these men answer for their sins, who stand thus condemned for their devotions? And thus, from the persons here charged by the apostle with the sin of idolatry, pass we now to the

3d thing proposed; namely, the cause or reason

of their falling into this sin; and that was their holding of the truth in unrighteousness. For the making out of which, we must inquire into these two things.

1. What was the truth here spoken of.

2. How they held it in unrighteousness.

For the first of them; there were these six great truths, the knowledge of which the Gentile philosophers stood accountable for: as,

1. That there was a God; a being distinct from this visible, material world; infinitely perfect, omniscient, omnipotent, eternal, transcendently good and holy. For all this is included in the very notion of a God. And this was a truth wrote with a sunbeam, clear and legible to all mankind, and received by universal consent.

2. That this God was the maker and governor of this visible world. The first of which was evident from the very order of causes; the great argument, by which natural reason evinces a God. It being necessary, in such an order or chain of causes, to ascend to, and terminate in, some first: which should be the original of motion, and the cause of all other things, but itself be caused by none. And then, that God also governed the world, this followed from the other; for that a creature should not depend upon its Creator in all respects, in which it is capable of depending upon him, (amongst which, to be governed by him, is certainly one,) is contrary to the common order and nature of things, and those essential relations which (by virtue thereof) they bear to one another; and consequently absurd and impossible. So that upon a bare principle of reason, creation must needs infer providence; and God's

making the world, irrefragably prove that he governs it too; or that a Being of a dependent nature remains nevertheless independent upon him in that respect. Besides all which, it is also certain that the heathens did actually acknowledge the world governed by a supreme mind; which knowledge, whether they had it from tradition, or the discourses of reason, they stood however equally accountable for upon either account.

3dly, That this God, or supreme Being, was to be worshipped. For this was founded upon his omnipotence, and his providence. Since he, who could preserve or destroy as he pleased, and withal governed the world, ought surely to be depended upon by those who were thus obnoxious to his power, and subject to his government; which dependence could not manifest itself but by acts of worship, homage, and address to the person thus depended upon.

4thly, That this God was to be worshipped, or addressed to, by virtuous and pious practices. For so much his essential holiness required, and those innate notions of *turpe et honestum*, wrote in the consciences of all men, and joined with the apprehensions they had of the infinite purity of the divine nature, could not but suggest.

5thly, That upon any deviation from virtue and piety, it was the duty of every rational creature so deviating, to condemn, renounce, and be sorry for every such deviation: that is, in other words, to repent of it. What indeed the issue or effect of such a repentance might be, bare reason could not of itself discover, but that a peccant creature should disapprove, and repent of every violation of, and decli-

nation from, the rules of just and honest, this, right reason, discoursing upon the stock of its own principles, could not but infer. And the conscience of every man, before it is debauched and hardened by habitual sin, will recoil after the doing of an evil action, and acquit him after a good.

6thly and lastly, That every such deviation from duty rendered the person so deviating liable and obnoxious to punishment. I do not say, that it made punishment necessary, but that it made the person so transgressing worthy of it; so that it might justly be inflicted on him, and consequently ought rationally to be feared and expected by him. And upon this notion, universally fixed in the minds of men, were grounded all their sacrifices, and rites of expiation, and lustration. The use of which has been so general, both as to times and places, that there is no age or nation of the world in which they have not been used as principal parts of religious worship.

Now these six grand truths were the talent entrusted, and deposited by God in the hands of the Gentiles for them to traffick with, to his honour, and their own happiness. But what little improvement they made of this noble talent, shall now be shewn in the next particular; namely, their holding of it in unrighteousness: which they did several ways. As,

1. By not acting up to what they knew. As in many things their knowledge was short of the truth, so, almost in all things, their practice fell short of their knowledge. The principles by which they walked, were as much below those by which they judged, as their feet were below their head. By the

one they looked upwards, while they placed the other in the dirt. Their writings sufficiently shew what raised and sublime notions they had of the divine nature, while they employed their reason about that glorious object, and what excellent discourses of virtue and morality the same reason enabled them to furnish the world with. But when they came to transcribe these theories into practice, one seemed to be of no other use to them at all, but only to reproach them for the other. For they neither depended upon this God as if he were almighty, nor worshipped him as if they believed him holy; but in both prevaricated with their own principles to that degree, that their practice was a direct contradiction to their speculations. For the proof of which, go over all the heathen temples, and take a survey of the absurdities and impieties of their worship, their monstrous sacrifices, their ridiculous rites and ceremonies. In all which, common sense and reason could not but tell them, that the good and gracious God could not be pleased, nor consequently worshipped, with any thing barbarous or cruel; nor the most holy God with any thing filthy and unclean; nor a God infinitely wise with any thing sottish or ridiculous; and yet these were the worthy qualifications of the heathen worship, even amongst their greatest and most reputed philosophers.

And then, for the duties of morality; surely they never wanted so much knowledge as to inform and convince them of the unlawfulness of a man's being a murderer, an hater of God, a covenant-breaker, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful. These were enormities branded and condemned by the first and most natural verdict of common hu-

manity; and so very gross and foul, that no man could pretend ignorance that they ought to be avoided by him: and yet the apostle tells us, in the last verse of this chapter, that they practised so much short of their knowledge, even as to these particulars, *That though they knew the judgment of God, that those who committed such things were worthy of death, yet not only did the same themselves, but also had pleasure in those that did them.* Which certainly is the greatest demonstration of a mind wholly possessed and even besotted with the love of vice, that can possibly be imagined. So notoriously did these wretches balk the judgment of their consciences, even in the plainest and most undeniable duties relating to God, their neighbour, and themselves; as if they had owned neither God nor neighbour, but themselves.

2dly, These men held the truth in unrighteousness, by not improving those known principles into the proper consequences deducible from them. For surely had they discoursed rightly but upon this one principle, that God was a being infinitely perfect, they could never have been brought to assert or own a multiplicity of gods. For can one god include in him all perfection, and another god include in him all perfection too? Can there be any more than all? and if this all be in one, can it be also in another? Or, if they allot and parcel out several perfections to several deities, do they not, by this, assert contradictions, making a deity only to such a measure perfect; whereas a deity, as such, implies perfection beyond all measure or limitation? Nor could they, in the next place, have slid into those brutish immoralities of life, had they duly ma-

nured those first practical notions and dictates of right reason, which the nature of man is originally furnished with; there being not any one of them, but what is naturally productive of many more. But they quickly stifled and overlaid those infant principles, those seeds of piety and virtue sown by God and nature in their own hearts; so that they brought a voluntary darkness and stupidity upon their minds; and, by not *exercising their senses to discern between good and evil*, came at length to lose all sense and discernment of either: whereupon, as the apostle says of them in the 21st verse of this chapter to the Romans, *their foolish heart was darkened:* and that, not only by the just judgment of God, but also by the very course of nature; nothing being more evident from experience, than that the not using or employing any faculty or power, either of body or soul, does insensibly weaken and impair that faculty; as a sword by long lying still will contract a rust, which shall not only deface its brightness, but by degrees also consume its very substance. Doing nothing, naturally ends in being nothing.

It holds in all operative principles whatsoever, but especially in such as relate to morality; in which, not to proceed, is certainly to go backward; there being no third estate between not advancing and retreating in a virtuous course. Growth is of the very essence and nature of some things. To be, and to thrive, is all one with them; and they know no middle season between their spring and their fall.

And therefore, as it is said in Matt. xiii. 12. that *from him who hath not, shall be taken away even*

that which he hath: so he, who neglects the practice, shall, in the end also, lose the very power and faculty of doing well. That which stops a man's actual breathing very long, will, in the issue, take away his very power of breathing too. To hide one's talent in the ground is to bury it; and the burial of a thing either finds it dead, or will quickly make it so.

3dly, These men held the truth in unrighteousness, by concealing what they knew. For how rightly soever they might conceive of God and of virtue, yet the illiterate multitude, who, in such things, must see with better eyes than their own, or see not at all, were never the wiser for it. Whatsoever the inward sentiments of those sophisters were, they kept them wholly to themselves; hiding all those important truths, all those useful notions from the people, and teaching the world much otherwise from what they judged themselves. Though I think a greater truth than this cannot well be uttered; That never any thing or person was really good, which was good only to itself. But from hence it was, that, even in a literal sense, sin came to be established by a law. For amongst the Gentiles, the laws themselves were the greatest offenders. They made little or no provision for virtue, but very much for vice: for the early and universal practice of sin had turned it into a custom, and custom, especially in sin, quickly passed into common law.

Socrates was the only martyr for the testimony of any truth that we read of amongst the heathens, who chose rather to be condemned, and to die, than either to renounce or conceal his judgment touching the

unity of the Godhead. But as for the rest of them, even Zeno and Chrysippus, Plato and Aristotle, and generally all those heroes in philosophy, they swam with the stream, (as foul as it ran,) leaving the poor vulgar as ignorant and sottish, as vicious and idolatrous, as they first found them.

But it has been always the practice of the governing cheats of all religions, to keep the people in as gross ignorance as possibly they could; for, we see, the heathen impostors used it before the Christian impostors took it up and improved it. *Si populus decipi vult, decipiatur*, was ever a gold and silver rule amongst them all; though the pope's legate first turned it into a benediction: and a very strange one it was, and enough, one would think, to have made all that heard it look about them, and begin to bless themselves. For as Demetrius, a great master in such arts, told his fellow-artists, Acts xix. 25. *it was by this craft that they got their wealth:* so long experience has found it true of the unthinking *mobile;* that the closer they shut their eyes, the wider they open their hands. But this base trade the church of England always abhorred; and for that cause, as to its temporal advantages, has fared accordingly; and, by this time, may be thought fit for another reformation.

And thus I have shewn three notable ways, by which the philosophers and learned men amongst the Gentiles held the truth in unrighteousness: as first, That they did not practise up to it: 2dly, That they did not improve it: and 3dly and lastly, That they concealed and dissembled it. And this was that which prepared and disposed them to greater enor-

mities: for, *changing the truth of God into a lie*, they became like those, who, by often repeating a lie to others, came at length to believe it themselves. They owned the idolatrous worship of God so long, till, by degrees, even in spite of reason and nature, they thought that he ought so to be worshipped. But this stopped not here: for as one wickedness is naturally a step and introduction to another; so, from absurd and senseless devotions, they passed into vile affections, practising vices against nature, and that in such strange and abominable instances of sin, that nothing could equal the corruption of their manners, but the delusion of their judgments; both of them the true and proper causes of one another.

The consideration of which, one would think, should make men cautious, and fearful, how they suppress or debauch that spark of natural light, which God has set up in their souls. When nature is in the dark, it will venture to do any thing. And God knows how far the spirit of infatuation may prevail upon the heart, when it comes once to court and love a delusion. Some men hug an error, because it gratifies them in a freer enjoyment of their sensuality: and for that reason, God in judgment suffers them to be plunged into fouler and grosser errors; such as even unman, and strip them of the very principles of reason and sober discourse. For surely it could be no ordinary declension of nature, that could bring some men, after an ingenuous education in arts and philosophy, to place their *summum bonum* upon their trenchers, and their utmost felicity in wine and women, and those lusts and

pleasures, which a swine or a goat has as full and quick a sense of, as the greatest statesman or the best philosopher in the world.

Yet this was the custom, this the known voice of most of the Gentiles; *Dum vivimus vivamus; Let us eat and drink to-day, for to-morrow we must die.* That soul which God had given them comprehensive of both worlds, and capable of looking into the great mysteries of nature, of diving into the depths beneath, and of understanding the motions and influences of the stars above; even this glorious, active thing did they confine within the pitiful compass of the present fruition; forbidding it to take a prospect, so far as into the morrow; as if to think, to contemplate, or be serious, had been high treason against the empire and prerogative of sense, usurping the throne of their baffled and deposed reason.

And how comes it to pass, that even nowadays there is often seen such a vast difference between the former and the latter part of some men's lives? that those who first stepped forth into the world with high and promising abilities, vigorous intellectuals, and clear morals, come at length to grow sots and epicures, mean in their discourses, and dirty in their practices; but that, as by degrees, they remitted of their industry, loathed their business, and gave way to their pleasures, they let fall those generous principles, which, in their youthful days, had borne them upon the wing, and raised them to worthy and great thoughts; which thoughts and principles not being kept up and cherished, but smothered in sensual delights, God, for that cause, suffered them to flag and sink into low and inglorious satisfactions, and to enjoy themselves more in a revel or a

merry-meeting, a strumpet or a tavern, than in being useful to a church or a nation, in being a public good to society, and a benefit to mankind. The parts that God gave them, they held in unrighteousness, sloth, and sensuality; and this made God to desert and abandon them to themselves; so that they have had a doating and a decrepit reason, long before age had given them such a body.

And therefore I could heartily wish, that such young persons as hear me now, would lodge this one observation deep in their minds; *viz.* that God and nature have joined wisdom and virtue by such a near cognation, or rather such an inseparable connection, that a wise, a prudent, and an honourable old age, is seldom or never found, but as the reward and effect of a sober, a virtuous, and a well-spent youth.

4. I descend now to the fourth and last thing proposed; namely, The judgment, or rather the state and condition penally consequent upon the persons here charged by the apostle with idolatry; which is, *That they were without excuse.*

After the commission of sin, it is natural for the sinner to apprehend himself in danger, and, upon such apprehension, to provide for his safety and defence; and that must be one of these two ways: *viz.* either by pleading his innocence, or by using his power. But since it would be infinitely in vain for a finite power to contend with an infinite; innocence, if any thing, must be his plea; and that must be, either by an absolute denial, or, at least, by an extenuation or diminution of his sin. Though indeed this course will be found altogether as absurd as the other could be; it being every whit as irrational for a sinner to plead his innocence before omniscience, as it would

be to oppose his power to omnipotence. However, the last refuge of a guilty person, is to take shelter under an excuse; and so to mitigate, if he cannot divert the blow. It was the method of the great pattern and parent of all sinners, Adam, first to hide, and then to excuse himself; to wrap the apple in the leaves, and to give his case a gloss at least, though not a defence. But now, when the sinner shall be stripped of this also, have all his excuses blown away, be stabbed with his own arguments, and, as it were, sacrificed upon that very altar which he fled to for succour, this surely is the height and crisis of a forlorn condition. Yet this was the case of the malefactors who stand here arraigned in the text; this was the consummation of their doom, that they were persons, not only unfit for a pardon, but even for a plea.

Now an excuse, in the nature of it, imports these two things.

1. The supposition of a sin.
2. The extenuation of its guilt.

As for the sin itself, we have already heard what that was, and we will now see how able they are to acquit themselves in point of its extenuation. In which, according to the two grand principles of human actions which determine their morality, the understanding and the will, the excuse must derive either from ignorance or unwillingness.

As for unwillingness, (to speak of this last first,) the heathen philosophers generally asserted the freedom of the will, and its inviolable dominion over its own actions; so that no force or coaction from without could entrench upon the absolute empire of this faculty.

It must be confessed indeed, that it hath been something lamed in this its freedom by original sin; of which defect the heathens themselves were not wholly ignorant, though they were of its cause. So that hereupon, the will is not able to carry a man out to a choice so perfectly, and in all respects good, but that still there is some adherent circumstance of imperfection, which, in strictness of morality, renders every action of it evil; according to that known and most true rule, *Malum ex quolibet defectu.*

Nevertheless, the will has still so much freedom left, as to enable it to choose any act in its kind good, whether it be an act of temperance, justice, or the like; as also to refuse any act in its kind evil, whether of intemperance, injustice, or the like; though yet it neither chooses one, nor refuses the other, with such a perfect concurrence of all due ingredients of action, but that still, in the sight of God, judging according to the rigid measures of the law, every such choice or refusal is indeed sinful and imperfect. This is most certain, whatsoever Pelagius and his brethren assert to the contrary.

But however, that measure of freedom which the will still retains, of being able to choose any act materially, and in its kind good, and to refuse the contrary, was enough to cut off all excuse from the heathen, who never duly improved the utmost of such a power, but gave themselves up to all the filthiness and licentiousness of life imaginable. In all which it is certain, that they acted willingly, and without compulsion; or rather indeed greedily, and without control.

The only persons amongst the heathens who sophisticated nature and philosophy in this particular,

were the Stoicks; who affirmed a fatal, unchangeable concatenation of causes, reaching even to the elicit acts of man's will. So that according to them there was no act of volition exerted by it, but, all circumstances considered, it was impossible for the will not to exert that volition. But these were but one sect of philosophers; that is, but an handful in comparison of the rest of the Gentiles: ridiculous enough, for what they held and taught, and consequently not to be laid in the balance with the united judgment of all other learned men in the world, unanimously exploding this opinion. Questionless therefore, a thing so deeply engraven upon the first and most inward notions of man's mind, as a persuasion of the will's freedom, would never permit the heathens (who are here charged by the apostle) to patronize and excuse their sins upon this score, that they committed them against their will, and that they had no power to do otherwise. In which, every hour's experience, and reflection upon the method of their own actings, could not but give them the lie to their face.

The only remaining plea therefore, which these men can take sanctuary in, must be that of ignorance; since there could be no pretence for unwillingness. But the apostle divests them even of this also: for he says expressly, in verse 19, *that what might be known of God*, that famous and so much disputed of τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ, was manifested in them; and in verse 21, their unexcusableness is stated upon the supposition of this very thing, *that they knew God*, but, for all that, *did not glorify him as God*. This was the sum of their charge; and how it has been made good against them we have already

shewn, in what we have spoken about their idolatry, very briefly, I confess, but enough to shew its absurdity, though not to account for its variety, when Vossius's very abridgment of it makes a thick volume in folio.

The plea of ignorance therefore is also taken out of their hands; forasmuch as they knew that there was a God; and that this God made and governed the world; and upon that account was to be worshipped and addressed to; and that with such a worship as should be agreeable to his nature, both in respect of the piety and virtue of the worshipper, and also of the means of the worship itself. So that he was neither to be worshipped with impious and immoral practices, nor with corporeal resemblances. For how could an image help men in directing their thoughts to a Being which bore no similitude or cognation to that image at all? And what resemblance could wood or stone bear to a spirit void of all sensible qualities and bodily dimensions? How could they put men in mind of infinite power, wisdom, and holiness, and such other attributes, of which they had not the least mark or character?

But now, if these things could not possibly resemble any perfection of the Deity, what use could they be of to men in their addresses to God? For can a man's devotions be helped by that which brings an error upon his thoughts? And certain it is, that it is natural for a man, by directing his prayers to an image, to suppose the Being he prays to represented by that image. Which how injurious, how contumelious it must needs be to the glorious, incomprehensible nature of God, by begetting such false and low apprehensions of him in the minds of

his creature, let common sense, not perverted by interest and design, be judge. From all which it follows, that the idolatrous heathens, and especially the most learned of them, not being able to charge their idolatry either upon ignorance or unwillingness, were wholly *without excuse*. So that it is to be feared, that Averroes had not the right way of blessing himself, when, in defiance of Christianity, he wished, *Sit anima mea cum philosophis.*

And now, after all, I cannot but take notice, that all that I have said of the heathen idolatry is so exactly applicable to the idolatry of another sort of men in the world, that one would think this first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans were not so much an address to the ancient Romans, as a description of the modern.

But to draw towards a close. The use and improvement of the foregoing discourse shall be briefly to inform us of these two things.

1st, The signally great and peculiar mercy of God to those to whom he has revealed the gospel, since there was nothing that could have obliged him to it upon the account of his justice: for if there had, the heathens, to whom he revealed it not, could not have been thus *without excuse*, but might very rationally have expostulated the case with their great Judge, and demurred to the equity of the sentence, had they been condemned by him. But it appears from hence, that what was sufficient to render men inexcusable, was not therefore sufficient to save them.

It is not said by the apostle, nor can it be proved by any one else, that God vouchsafed to the heathens the means of salvation, if so be the gospel be the only means of it. And yet I will not, I dare not af-

firm, that God will save none of those to whom the sound of the gospel never reached: though this is evident, that if he does save any of them, it must not be by that ordinary, stated, appointed method, which the scripture has revealed to us, and which they were wholly ignorant of. For grant that the heathens knew that there was a God, who both made and governed the world, and who, upon that account, was to be worshipped, and that with such a worship as should be suitable to such a Being; yet what principle of mere reason could assure them, that *this God would be a rewarder of such as diligently sought and served him?* For certain it is, that there is nothing in the nature of God to oblige him to reward any service of his creature; forasmuch as all that the creature can do is but duty; and even now, at this time, God has no other obligation upon him, but his own free promise to reward the piety and obedience of his servants; which promise reason of itself could never have found out, till God made it known by revelation. And moreover, what principle of reason could assure a man, that God would pardon sinners upon any terms whatsoever? Possibly it might know, that God could do so; but this was no sufficient ground for men to depend upon. And then, last of all, as for the way of his pardoning sinners, that he should do it upon a satisfaction paid to his justice by such a Saviour as should be both God and man; this was utterly impossible for all the reason of mankind to find out.

For that these things could be read in the book of nature, or the common works of God's providence, or be learned by the sun and moon's preaching the gospel, as some have fondly (not to say profanely)

enough asserted, it is infinitely sottish to imagine, and can indeed be nothing else but the turning the grace of God into wanton and unreasonable propositions.

It is clear therefore, that the heathens had no knowledge of that way by which alone we expect salvation. So that all the hope which we can have for them is, that the gospel may not be the utmost limit of the divine mercy; but that the merits of Christ may overflow, and run over the pale of the church, so as to reach even many of those who lived and died invincibly ignorant of him.

But whether this shall be so, or no, God alone knows, who only is privy to the great counsels of his own will. It is a secret hid from us; and therefore, though we may hope compassionately, yet I am sure we can pronounce nothing certainly: it is enough for us, that God has asserted his justice, even in his dealing with those whom he treats not upon terms of evangelical mercy. So that such persons can neither excuse themselves, nor yet accuse him; who, in the severest sentence that he can pronounce upon the sinner, will (as the Psalmist tells us) *be justified when he speaks, and clear when he is judged.*

2dly, In the next place, we gather hence the unspeakably wretched and deplorable condition of obstinate sinners under the gospel. The sun of mercy has shined too long and too bright upon such, to leave them any shadow of excuse. For, let them argue over all the topics of divine goodness and human weakness, and whatsoever other pretences poor sinking sinners are apt to catch at, to support and save themselves by; yet how trifling must be their plea! how impertinent their defence!

For admit an impenitent heathen to plead, that, albeit his conscience told him that he had sinned, yet it could not tell him that there was any provision of mercy for him upon his repentance. He knew not whether amendment of life would be accepted, after the law was once broke; or that there was any other righteousness to atone or merit for him, but his own.

But no Christian, who has been taken into the arms of a better covenant, and grown up in the knowledge of a Saviour, and the doctrine of faith and repentance from dead works, can speak so much as one plausible word for his impenitence. And therefore it was said of him who came to the *marriage-feast without a wedding-garment*, that, being charged, and apprehended for it, ἐφιμώθη, *he was speechless*, struck with shame and silence, the proper effects of an overpowering guilt, too manifest to be denied, and too gross to be defended. His reason deserted, and his voice failed him, finding himself arraigned, convicted, and condemned in the court of his own conscience.

So that if, after all this, his great Judge had freely asked him, what he could allege or say for himself, why he should not have judgment to die eternally, and sentence to be awarded according to the utmost rigours of the law, he could not, in this forlorn case, have made use of the very last plea of a cast criminal: nor so much as have cried, *Mercy, Lord, mercy.* For still his conscience would have replied upon him, that mercy had been offered and abused; and that the time of mercy was now past. And so, under this overwhelming conviction, every gospel-sinner must pass to his eternal execution, taking the

whole load of his own damnation solely and entirely upon himself, and acquitting the most just God, *who is righteous in all his works, and holy in all his ways.*

To whom, therefore, be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

Sacramental Preparation:

SET FORTH IN

A SERMON

PREACHED AT WESTMINSTER ABBEY,

APRIL 8, 1688,

BEING PALM SUNDAY.

MATTHEW xxii. 12.

And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment?

THE whole scheme of these words is figurative, as being a parabolical description of God's vouchsafing to the world the invaluable blessing of the gospel, by the similitude of a king, with great magnificence, solemnizing his son's marriage, and with equal bounty bidding and inviting all about him to that royal solemnity; together with his severe animadversion, both upon those who would not come, and upon one who did come in a very unbeseeming manner.

For the better understanding of which words, we must observe, that in all parables, two things are to be considered.

First, The scope and design of the parable; and,

Secondly, The circumstantial passages, serving only to complete and make up the narration.

Accordingly, in our application of any parable to the thing designed and set forth by it, we must not look for an absolute and exact correspondence of all the circumstantial or subservient passages of the metaphorical part of it, with just so many of the same, or the like passages in the thing intended by it; but it is sufficient, that there be a certain analogy, or agreement between them, as to the principal scope and design of both.

As for the design of this parable, it is, no doubt, to set forth the free offer of the gospel, with all its rich privileges, to the Jewish church and nation, in the first place; and upon their refusal of it, and God's rejection of them for that refusal, to declare the calling of the gentiles in their room, by a free, unlimited tender of the gospel to all nations whatsoever; adding withal a very dreadful and severe sentence upon those, who, being so freely invited, and so generously admitted, to such high and undeserved privileges, should nevertheless abuse and despise them by an unworthy, wicked, and ungrateful deportment under them.

For men must not think that the gospel is all made up of privilege and promise, but that there is something of duty to be performed, as well as of privilege to be enjoyed. No welcome to a wedding supper without a wedding garment; and no coming by a wedding garment for nothing. In all the transactions between God and the souls of men, something is expected on both sides; there being a fixed, indissoluble, and (in the language of the parable) a kind of marriage-tie between duty and privilege, which renders them inseparable.

Now, though I question not but that this parable

of the wedding supper comprehends in it the whole complex of all the blessings and privileges exhibited by the gospel; yet, I conceive, that there is one principal privilege amongst all the rest, that it seems more peculiarly to aim at, or at least may more appositely and emphatically be applied to, than to any other whatsoever: and that is the blessed sacrament of the eucharist, by which all the benefits of the gospel are in an higher, fuller, and more divine manner conveyed to the faithful, than by any other duty or privilege belonging to our excellent religion. And for this, I shall offer these three following reasons.

1. Because the foundation of all parables is, as we have shewn, some analogy or similitude between the tropical or allusive part of the parable, and the thing couched under it, and intended by it. But now, of all the benefits, privileges, or ordinances of the gospel, which of them is there that carries so natural a resemblance to a wedding supper as that, which every one of a very ordinary, discerning faculty may observe in the sacrament of the eucharist? For, surely, neither the preaching of the word, nor yet the sacrament of baptism, bears any such resemblance or affinity to it. But, on the other side, this sacrament of the eucharist so lively resembles, and so happily falls in with it, that it is indeed itself a supper, and is called a supper, and that by a genuine, proper, as well as a common and received appellation.

2. This sacrament is not only with great propriety of speech called a supper; but moreover, as it is the grand and prime means of the nearest and most intimate union and conjunction of the soul with Christ, it may, with a peculiar significancy, be called also a

wedding supper. And, as Christ frequently in scripture owns himself related to the church, as an husband to a spouse; so, if these nuptial endearments, by which Christ gives himself to the soul, and the soul mutually gives itself to Christ, pass between Christ and believers in any ordinance of the gospel, doubtless it is most eminently and effectually in this: which is another pregnant instance of the notable resemblance between this divine sacrament and the wedding supper in the parable; and consequently, a further argument of the elegant and expressive signification of one by the other.

3dly and lastly, The very manner of celebrating this sacrament, which is by the breaking of bread, was the way and manner of transacting marriages in some of the eastern countries. Thus Q. Curtius reports, that when Alexander the Great married the Persian Roxana, the ceremony they used was no other but this; *panem gladio divisum uterque libabat;* he divided a piece of bread with his sword, of which each of them took a part, and so thereby the nuptial rites were performed. Besides, that this ceremony of feasting belongs most properly both to marriage and to the eucharist, as both of them have the nature of a covenant. And all covenants were, in old times, solemnized and accompanied with festival eating and drinking; the persons newly confederate always thereupon feasting together in token of their full and perfect accord, both as to interest and affection.

And now these three considerations together, so exactly suiting the parable of the wedding supper to this spiritual, divine banquet of the gospel, if it does not primarily, and in its first design, intend it; yet,

certainly it may with greater advantage of resemblance be applied to it, than to any other duty or privilege belonging to Christianity.

Upon the warrant of which so very particular and extraordinary a cognation between them, I shall, at present, treat of the words wholly with reference to this sacred and divine solemnity, observing and gathering from them, as they lie in coherence with the foregoing and following parts of the parable, these two propositions.

1. That to a worthy participation of the holy mysteries and great privileges of the gospel, and particularly that of the Lord's supper, there is indispensably required a suitable preparation.

2. That God is a strict observer of, and a severe animadverter upon, such as presume to partake of those mysteries, without such a preparation.

And first, for the first of these; *viz.* That to a worthy participation of the holy mysteries, &c.

Now this proposition imports in it two things:

1. That to a right discharge of this duty, a preparation is necessary.

2. That every preparation is not sufficient. And first, for the

First of these: That a preparation is necessary. And this, I confess, is a subject which I am heartily sorry that any preacher should find it needful to speak so much as one word upon. For would any man in his wits venture to die without preparation? And if not, let me tell you, that nothing less than that which will fit a man for death, can fit him for the sacrament. The truth is, there is nothing great or considerable in the world, which ought to be done, or ventured upon, without preparation: but,

above all, how dangerous, sottish, and irrational is it, to engage in any thing or action extempore, where the concern is eternity!

None but the careless and the confident (and few are confident, but what are first careless) would rush rudely into the presence of a great man: and shall we, in our applications to the great God, take that to be religion, which the common reason of mankind will not allow to be manners? The very rules of worldly civility might instruct men how to order their addresses to God. For who, that is to appear before his prince or patron, would not view and review himself over and over, with all imaginable care and solicitude, that there be nothing justly offensive in his habit, language, or behaviour? But especially, if he be vouchsafed the honour of his table, it would be infinitely more absurd and shameful to appear foul and sordid there; and in the dress of the kitchen, receive the entertainments of the parlour.

What previous cleansings and consecrations, and what peculiar vestments were the priests, under the law, enjoined to use, when they were to appear before God in the sanctuary! And all this upon no less a penalty than death. This and this they were to do, lest they died, lest God should strike them dead upon the spot; as we read in Levit. viii. 35. and in many other places in the books of Moses. And so exact were the Jews in their preparations for the solemn times of God's worship, that every σάββατον had its προσάββατον or παρασκευὴ, that is, a part of the sixth day, from the hour of six in the evening, to fit them for the duties of the seventh day: nor was this all; but they had also a προπαρασκευὴ, beginning about three in the after-

noon, to prepare them for that: and indeed, the whole day was, in a manner, but preparative to the next; several works being disallowed and forborne amongst them on that day, which were not so upon any of the foregoing five: so careful, even to scrupulosity, were they to keep their sabbath with due reverence and devotion, that they must not only have a time to prepare them for that, but a further time also to prepare them for their very preparations.

Nay, and the heathens, (many of them at least,) when they were to sacrifice to their greatest and most revered deities, used, on the evening before, to have a certain preparative rite or ceremony, called by them *cœna pura;* that is, a supper, consisting of some peculiar meats, in which they imagined a kind of holiness: and, by eating of which, they thought themselves sanctified, and fitted to officiate about the mysteries of the ensuing festival. And what were all their lustrations, but so many solemn purifyings, to render both themselves and their sacrifices acceptable to their gods?

So that we see here a concurrence both of the Jews and heathens in this practice, before Christianity ever appeared: which to me is a kind of demonstration, that the necessity of men's preparing themselves for the sacred offices of religion was a lesson which the mere light and dictates of common reason, without the help of revelation, taught all the knowing and intelligent part of the world.

I will wash my hands in innocency, says David, *and so will I compass thine altar,* Psalm xxvi. 6. And as the apostle told the Hebrews, Heb. xiii. 10. *We also,* we Christians, *have an altar* as well as

they; an altar as sacred, an altar to be approached with as much awe and reverence; and though there be no fire upon it, yet there is a dreadful one that follows it. A fire, that does not indeed consume the offering, but such an one as will be sure to seize and prey upon the unworthy offerer. *I will be sanctified,* says God, *in them that come nigh me,* Levit. x. 3. And God then accounts himself sanctified in such persons, when they sanctify themselves. Nadab and Abihu were a dreadful exposition of this text.

And for what concerns ourselves; he that shall throughly consider what the heart of man is, what sin and the world is, and what it is to approve one's self to an all-searching eye, in so sublime a duty as the sacrament, must acknowledge that a man may as well go about it without a soul, as without preparation.

For the holiest man living, by conversing with the world, insensibly draws something of soil and taint from it: the very air and mien, the way and business of the world, still, as it were, rubbing something upon the soul, which must be fetched off again, before it can be able heartily to converse with God. Many secret indispositions, coldnesses, and aversions to duty, will undiscernibly steal upon it; and it will require both time and close application of mind, to recover it to such a frame as shall dispose and fit it for the spiritualities of religion.

And such as have made trial, find it neither so easy nor so ready a passage from the noise, the din, and hurry of business, to the retirements of devotion, from the exchange to the closet, and from the freedoms of conversation, to the recollections and disciplines of the spirit.

The Jews, as soon as they came from markets, or any other such promiscuous resorts, would be sure to use accurate, and more than ordinary washings. And had their washings soaked through the body into the soul, and had not their inside reproached their outside, I see nothing in this custom, but what was allowable enough, and (in a people which needed washing so much) very commendable. Nevertheless, whatsoever it might have in it peculiar to the genius of that nation, the spiritual use and improvement of it, I am sure, may very well reach the best of us. So that if the Jews thought this practice requisite before they sat down to their own tables, let us Christians think it absolutely necessary, when we come to God's table, not to eat till we have washed. And when I have said so, I suppose I need not add, that our washing is to be like our eating, both of them spiritual; that we are to carry it from the hand to the heart, to improve a ceremonial nicety into a substantial duty, and the modes of civility into the realities of religion.

And thus much for the first thing, that a preparation in general is necessary. But then, 2dly, the other thing imported in the proposition is, That every preparation is not sufficient. It must be a suitable preparation; none but a wedding garment will serve the turn; a garment, as much fitted to the solemnity, as to the body itself that wears it.

Now all fitness lies in a particular commensuration, or proportion of one thing to another; and that such an one as is founded in the very nature of things themselves, and not in the opinions of men concerning them. And for this cause it is, that the soul, no less than the body, must have its several

distinct postures and dispositions, fitting it for several distinct offices and performances. And as no man comes with folded arms to fight or wrestle, nor prepares himself for the battle as he would compose himself to sleep; so, upon a true estimate of things, it will be found every whit as absurd and irrational, for a man to discharge the most extraordinary duty of his religion, at the rate of an ordinary devotion. For this is really a paradox in practice, and men may sometimes do, as well as speak, contradictions.

There is a great festival now drawing on; a festival, designed chiefly for the acts of a joyful piety, but generally made only an occasion of bravery. I shall say no more of it at present, but this; that God expects from men something more than ordinary at such times, and that it were much to be wished, for the credit of their religion, as well as the satisfaction of their consciences, that their Easter devotions would, in some measure, come up to their Easter dress.

Now that our preparation may answer the important work and duty which we are to engage in, these two conditions, or qualifications, are required in it.

1. That it be habitual.

2. That it be also actual.

For it is certain, that there may both be acts which proceed not from any preexisting habits; and, on the other side, habits which lie for a time dormant, and do not at all exert themselves in action. But in the case now before us, there must be a conjunction of both; and one without the other can never be effectual for that purpose, for which both together are but sufficient. And,

First, For habitual preparation. This consists in a standing, permanent habit, or principle of holiness, wrought chiefly by God's Spirit, and instrumentally by his word, in the heart or soul of man: such a principle as is called, both by our Saviour and his apostles, the *new birth*, the *new man*, the *immortal seed*, and the like; and by which a man is so universally changed and transformed in the whole frame and temper of his soul, as to have a new judgment and sense of things, new desires, new appetites and inclinations.

And this is first produced in him by that mighty spiritual change which we call conversion: which, being so rarely and seldom found in the hearts of men, (even where it is most pretended to,) is but too full and sad a demonstration of the truth of that terrible saying; *That few are chosen;* and consequently, *but few saved.* For who almost is there, of whom we can with any rational assurance, or perhaps so much as likelihood, affirm, Here is a man, whose nature is renewed, whose heart is changed, and the stream of whose appetites is so turned, that he does with as high and quick a relish taste the ways of duty, holiness, and strict living, as others, or as he himself before this, grasped at the most enamouring proposals of sin; who almost, I say, is there, who can reach and verify the height of this character? and yet, without which, the scripture absolutely affirms, *that a man cannot see the kingdom of God,* John iii. 3. For, let preachers say and suggest what they will, men will do as they use to do; and custom generally is too hard for conscience, in spite of all its convictions. Possibly sometimes in hearing or reading the word, the

conscience may be alarmed, the affections warmed, good desires begin to kindle, and to form themselves into some degrees of resolution; but the heart remaining all the time unchanged, as soon as men slide into the common course and converse of the world, all those resolutions and convictions quickly cool and languish, and after a few days are dismissed as troublesome companions. But assuredly no man was ever made a true convert, or a new creature, at so easy a rate; sin was never dispossessed, nor holiness introduced, by such feeble, vanishing impressions. Nothing under a total, through change will suffice; neither tears, nor trouble of mind, neither good desires nor intentions, nor yet the relinquishment of some sins, nor the performance of some good works will avail any thing, *but a new creature:* a word, that comprehends more in it than words can well express; and perhaps, after all that can be said of it, never throughly to be understood by what a man hears from others, but by what he must feel within himself.

And now, that this is required as the groundwork of all our preparations for the sacrament, is evident from hence; because this sacrament is not first designed to make us holy, but rather supposes us to be so; it is not a converting, but a confirming ordinance: it is properly our spiritual food. And, as all food presupposes a principle of life in him who receives it, which life is, by this means, to be continued and supported; so the sacrament of the Lord's supper is originally intended to preserve and maintain that spiritual life, which we do or should receive in baptism, or at least by a through conversion after it. Upon which account, according to the

true nature and intent of this sacrament, men should not expect life, but growth from it: and see that there be something to be fed, before they seek out for provision. For the truth is, for any one who is not passed from death to life, and has not in him that new living principle, which we have been hitherto speaking of, to come to this spiritual repast, is upon the matter as absurd and preposterous, as if he who makes a feast should send to the graves and the churchyards for guests, or entertain and treat a corpse at a banquet.

Let men therefore consider, before they come hither, whether they have any thing besides the name they received in baptism to prove their christianity by. Let them consider, whether, as by their baptism, they formerly washed away their original guilt, so they have not since, by their actual sins, washed away their baptism. And, if so, whether the converting grace of God has set them upon their legs again, by forming in them a new nature. And that, such an one, as exerts and shews itself by the sure, infallible effects of a good life: such an one, as enables them to reject and trample upon all the alluring offers of the world, the flesh, and the devil, so as not to be conquered or enslaved by them; and to choose the hard and rugged paths of duty, rather than the easy and voluptuous ways of sin: which every Christian, by the very nature of his religion, as well as by his baptismal vow, is strictly obliged to do: and if, upon an impartial survey of themselves, men find that no such change has passed upon them, either let them prove that they may be Christians upon easier terms, or have a care how they intrude upon so great and holy an ordinance,

in which God is so seldom mocked, but it is to the mocker's confusion. And thus much for habitual preparation. But,

2dly, Over and above this, there is required also an actual preparation; which is, as it were, the furbishing or rubbing up of the former habitual principle.

We have both of them excellently described in Matt. xxv. in the parable of the ten virgins; of which, the *five wise* are said to have had *oil in their lamps;* yet, notwithstanding that, midnight and weariness was too hard for them, and they all slumbered and slept, and their lamps cast but a dim and a feeble light till the bridegroom's approach; but then, upon the first alarm of that, they quickly *rose, and trimmed their lamps,* and without either trimming or painting themselves, (being as much too wise, as some should be too old for such follies,) they presently put themselves into a readiness to receive their surprising guest. Where, by their *having oil in their lamps,* no doubt, must be understood a principle of grace infused into their hearts, or the new nature formed within them; and, by their *trimming their lamps,* must be meant their actual exercise and improvement of that standing principle, in the particular instances of duty, suitable and appropriate to the grand solemnity of the bridegroom's reception. In like manner, when a man comes to this sacrament, it is not enough that he has an habitual stock of grace, that he has the immortal seed of a living faith sown in his heart. This indeed is necessary, but not sufficient; his faith must be, not only living, but lively too; it must be brightened and stirred up, and, as it were, put into a posture

by a particular exercise of those several virtues, that are specifically requisite to a due performance of this duty: habitual grace is the life, and actual grace the beauty and ornament of the soul; and therefore, let people in this high and great concern be but so just to their souls, as, in one much less, they never fail to be to their bodies; in which the greatest advantages of natural beauty make none think the further advantage of a decent dress superfluous.

Nor is it at all strange, if we look into the reason of things, that a man habitually good and pious, should, at some certain turns and times of his life, be at a loss how to exert the highest acts of that habitual principle. For no creature is perfect and pure act; especially a creature so compounded of soul and body, that body seems much the stronger part in the composition.

Common experience shews that the wisest of men are not always fit and disposed to act wisely, nor the most admired speakers to speak eloquently and exactly. They have indeed an acquired, standing ability of wisdom and eloquence within them, which gives them an habitual sufficiency for such performances. But, for all that, if the deepest statesman should presume to go to council immediately from his cups, or the ablest preacher think himself fitted to preach, only by stepping up to the pulpit; notwithstanding the policy of the one, and the eloquence of the other, they may chance to get the just character of bold fools for venturing, whatsoever good fortune may bring them off.

And therefore the most active powers and faculties of the mind require something besides them-

selves, to raise them to the full height of their natural activity; something to excite and quicken, and draw them forth into immediate action. And this holds proportionably in all things, animate or inanimate, in the world. The bare nature and essential form of fire will enable it to burn; but there must be an enlivening breath of air besides, to make it flame. A man has the same strength, sleeping and waking; but while he sleeps, it fits him no more for business than if he had none. Nor is it the having of wheels and springs, though never so curiously wrought and artificially set, but the winding of them up, that must give motion to the watch. And it would be endless to illustrate this subject by all the various instances that art and nature could supply us with.

But the case is much the same in spirituals: for grace in the soul, while the soul is in the body, will always have the ill neighbourhood of some remainders of corruption; which, though they do not conquer and extinguish, yet will be sure to slacken and allay the vigour and briskness of the renewed principle; so that when this principle is to engage in any great duty, it will need the actual intention, the particular stress and application of the whole soul, to disencumber and set it free, to scour off its rust, and remove those hinderances which would otherwise clog and check the freedom of its operations.

And thus having shewn, that to fit us for a due access to the holy sacrament, we must add actual preparation to habitual, I shall now endeavour to shew the several parts or ingredients, of which this actual preparation must consist.

And here I shall not pretend to give an account

of every particular duty that may be useful for this purpose, but shall only mention some of the principal, and such as may most peculiarly contribute towards it: as,

First, Let a man apply himself to the great and difficult work of self-examination by a strict scrutiny into, and survey of, the whole estate of his soul, according to that known and excellent rule of the apostle, in the very case now before us; 1 Cor. xi. 28. *Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread,* &c. If a man would have such a wedding garment as may fit him exactly, let self-examination take the measure. A duty of so mighty an influence upon all that concerns the soul, that it is indeed the very root and groundwork of all true repentance, and the necessary antecedent, if not also the direct cause of a sinner's return to God.

For, as there are some sins which require a particular and distinct repentance by themselves, and cannot be accounted for in the general heap of sins known and unknown; so, how is it possible for a man to repent rightly of such sins, unless, by a thorough search into the nature, number, and distinguishing circumstances of them, he comes to see how, and in what degree, they are to be repented of?

But the sovereign excellency and necessity of this duty needs no other nor greater proof of it, than this one consideration, That nothing in nature can be more grievous and offensive to a sinner, than to look into himself; and generally what grace requires, nature is most averse to. It is indeed as offensive as to rake into a dunghill; as grievous, as for one to read over his debts, when he is not able to pay

them; or for a bankrupt to examine and look into his accounts, which at the same time that they acquaint, must needs also upbraid him with his condition.

But as irksome as the work is, it is absolutely necessary. Nothing can well be imagined more painful, than to probe and search a purulent old sore to the bottom; but for all that, the pain must be endured, or no cure expected. And men certainly have sunk their reason to very gross, low, and absurd conceptions of God, when in the matter of sin they can make such false and short reckonings with him and their own hearts; for can they imagine, that God has therefore forgot their sins, because they are not willing to remember them? or will they measure his pardon by their own oblivion? What pitiful fig-leaves, what senseless and ridiculous shifts are these, not able to silence, and much less satisfy, an accusing conscience!

But now for the better management of this examination of our past lives, we must throughly canvass them with these and the like questions.

As for instance; let a man inquire what sins he has committed, and what breaches he has made upon those two great standing rules of duty, the decalogue, and our Saviour's divine sermon upon the mount. Let him inquire also what particular aggravations lie upon his sins; as, whether they have not been committed against strong reluctancy and light of conscience? after many winning calls of mercy to reclaim, and many terrible warnings of judgment to affright him? Whether resolutions, vows, and protestations have not been made against them? Whether they have not been repeated fre-

quently, and persisted in obstinately? And lastly, whether the same appetites to sin have not remained as active and unmortified after sacraments, as ever they had been before?

How important these considerations and heads of inquiry are, all who understand any thing will easily perceive. For this we must know, that the very same sin, as to the nature of it, stamped with any one of these aggravations, is, in effect, not the same. And he who has sinned the same great sin, after several times receiving the sacrament, must not think that God will accept him under ten times greater repentance and contrition for it, than he brought with him to that duty formerly. Whether God, by his grace, will enable him to rise up to such a pitch, or no, is uncertain; but most certain, that both his work is harder, and his danger greater, than it was or could be at the first.

Secondly, When a man has, by such a close and rigorous examination of himself, found out the *accursed thing*, and discovered his sin; the next thing in order must be, to work up his heart to the utmost hatred of it, and the bitterest sorrow and remorse for it. For self-examination having first presented it to the thoughts, these naturally transmit and hand it over to the passions. And this introduces the next ingredient of our sacramental preparations, to wit, repentance. Which arduous work I will suppose not now to begin, but to be renewed; and that with special reference to sins not repented of before; and yet more especially to those new scores which we still run ourselves upon, since the last preceding sacrament. Which method, faithfully and constantly observed, must needs have an admirable and mighty

effect upon the conscience, and keep a man from breaking, or running behindhand in his spiritual estate, which, without frequent accountings, he will hardly be able to prevent.

But, because this is a duty of such high consequence, I would by all means warn men of one very common, and yet very dangerous mistake about it; and that is, the taking of mere sorrow for sin for repentance. It is indeed a good introduction to it; but the porch, though never so fair and spacious, is not the house itself. Nothing passes in the accounts of God for repentance, but change of life: ceasing to do evil, and doing good, are the two great integral parts that complete this duty. For not to do evil is much better than the sharpest sorrow for having done it; and to do good is better and more valuable than both.

When a man has found out sin in his actions, let him resolutely arrest it there; but let him also pursue it home to his inclinations, and dislodge it thence; otherwise it will be all to little purpose; for the root being still left behind, it is odds but in time it will shoot out again.

Men befool themselves infinitely, when, by venting a few sighs or groans, putting the finger in the eye, and whimpering out a few melancholy words; and lastly, concluding all with, "I wish I had never "done so, and I am resolved never to do so more;" they will needs persuade themselves that they have repented; though perhaps in this very thing their heart all the while deceives them, and they neither really wish the one, nor resolve the other.

But whether they do or no, all true penitential sorrow will and must proceed much further. It must

force and make its way into the very inmost corners and recesses of the soul; it must shake all the powers of sin, producing in the heart strong and lasting aversions to evil, and equal dispositions to good, which, I must confess, are great things; but if the sorrow which we have been speaking of carry us not so far, let it express itself never so loudly and passionately, and discharge itself in never so many showers of tears and volleys of sighs, yet by all this it will no more purge a man's heart, than the washing of his hands can cleanse the rottenness of his bones. But,

Thirdly, When self-examination has both shewn us our sin, and repentance has disowned and cast it out, the next thing naturally consequent upon this is, with the highest importunity to supplicate God's pardon for the guilt, and his grace against the power of it. And this brings in prayer as the third preparative for the sacrament: a duty, upon which all the blessings of both worlds are entailed; a duty, appointed by God himself as the great conduit and noble instrument of commerce between heaven and earth; a duty, founded on man's essential dependence upon God; and so, in the ground and reason of it, perpetual, and consequently, in the practice of it, indispensable.

But I shall speak of it now only with reference to the sacrament. And so, whatsoever other graces may furnish us with a wedding garment, it is certain that prayer must put it on. Prayer is that by which a man engages all the auxiliaries of omnipotence itself against his sin; and is so utterly contrary to, and inconsistent with it, that the same heart cannot long hold them both, but one must soon quit possession of

it to the other; and either praying make a man leave off sinning, or sinning force him to give over praying.

Every real act of hatred of sin is, in the very nature of the thing, a partial mortification of it; and it is hardly possible for a man to pray heartily against his sin, but he must at the same time hate it too. I know a man may think that he hates his sin, when indeed he does not; but then it is also as true, that he does not sincerely pray against it, whatsoever he may imagine.

Besides, since the very life and spirit of prayer consists in an ardent, vehement desire of the thing prayed for; and since the nature of the soul is such, that it strangely symbolizes with the thing it mightily desires, it is evident, that if a man would have a devout, humble, sin-abhorring, self-denying frame of spirit, he cannot take a more efficacious course to attain it, than by praying himself into it. And so close a connection has this duty with the sacrament, that whatsoever we receive in the sacrament is properly in answer to our prayers. And consequently we may with great assurance conclude, that he who is not frequently upon his knees before he comes to that holy table, kneels to very little purpose when he is there. But then,

Fourthly, Because prayer is not only one of the highest and hardest duties in itself, but ought to be more than ordinarily fervent and vigorous before the sacrament; let the body be also called in as an assistant to the soul, and abstinence and fasting added to promote and heighten her devotions. Prayer is a kind of wrestling with God; and he who would win

the prize at that exercise, must be severely dieted for that purpose.

The truth is, fasting was ever acknowledged by the church, in all ages, as a singular instrument of religion, and a particular preparative to the sacrament. And hardly was there ever any thing great or heroic either done or attempted in religion without it. Thus, when Moses received the law from God, it was with fasting, Deut. ix. 9. When Christ entered upon the great office of his mediatorship, it was with fasting, Matt. iv. 2. And when Paul and Barnabas were separated to that high and difficult charge of preaching to the gentiles, Acts xiii. 2. still it was managed with fasting. And we know, the rubric of our own church always, almost, enjoins a fast to prepare us for a festival.

Bodily abstinence is certainly a great help to the spirit; and the experience of all wise and good men has ever found it so. The ways of nature and the methods of grace are vastly different. Good men themselves are never so surprised, as in the midst of their jollities; nor so fatally overtaken and caught, as when their *table is made the snare.* Even our first parents ate themselves out of paradise; and Job's children junketed and feasted together often, but the reckoning cost them dear at last. *The heart of the wise,* says Solomon, *is in the house of mourning;* and the house of fasting adjoins to it.

In a word, fasting is the diet of angels, the food and refection of souls, and the richest and highest aliment of grace. And he who fasts for the sake of religion, *hungers and thirsts after righteousness,* without a metaphor.

Fifthly, Since every devout prayer is designed to ascend and fly up to heaven; as fasting (according to St. Austin's allusion) has given it one wing, so let almsgiving to the poor supply it with another. And both these together will not only carry it up triumphant to heaven, but, if need require, bring heaven itself down to the devout person who sends it thither; as, while Cornelius was fasting and praying, (to which he still joined giving alms,) an angel from heaven was despatched to him with this happy message, Acts x. 4. *Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.* And nothing certainly can give a greater efficacy to prayer, and a more peculiar fitness for the sacrament, than an hearty and conscientious practice of this duty; without which all that has been mentioned hitherto is nothing but wind and air, pageantry and hypocrisy: for if there be any truer measure of a man, than by what he does, it must be by what he gives. He who is truly pious, will account it a wedding supper to feed the hungry, and a wedding garment to clothe the naked. And God and man will find it a very unfit garment for such a purpose, which has not in it a purse or pocket for the poor.

But so far are some from considering the poor before the sacrament, that they have been observed to give nothing to the poor, even at the sacrament: and those such, that if rich clothes might pass for a wedding garment, none could appear better fitted for such a solemnity than themselves; yet some such, I say, I myself have seen at a communion, drop nothing into the poor's bason.

But, good God! what is the heart of such worldlings made of, and what a mind do they bring with

them to so holy an ordinance! an ordinance in which none can be qualified to receive, whose heart does not serve them also to give.

From such indeed as have nothing, God expects nothing; but where God has given, as I may say, with both hands, and men return with none, such must know, that the poor have an action of debt against them, and that God himself will undertake and prosecute their suit for them: and if he does, since they could not find in their hearts to proportion their charity to their estates; nothing can be more just, than for God to proportion their estates to their charity; and by so doing, he cannot well give them a shrewder and a shorter cut.

In the mean time, let such know further, that whosoever dares, upon so sacred and solemn an occasion, approach the altar with bowels so shut up, as to leave nothing behind him there for the poor, shall be sure to carry something away with him from thence, which will do him but little good.

Sixthly, Since the charity of the hand signifies but little, unless it springs from the heart, and flows through the mouth, let the pious communicant, both in heart and tongue, thoughts and speech, put on a charitable, friendly, Christian temper of mind and carriage towards all. Wrath and envy, malice and backbiting, and the like, are direct contradictions to the very spirit of Christianity, and fit a man for the sacrament, just as much as a stomach overflowed with gall would help him to digest his meat. St. Paul often rebukes and schools such disturbers of the world very sharply, correcting a base humour by a very generous rule, Phil. ii. 3. *Let each*, says he, *esteem others better than themselves.* No man,

doubtless, shall ever be condemned of God for not judging his brother: for, be thy brother or neighbour never so wicked and ungodly, satisfy thyself with this, that another's wickedness shall never damn thee; but thy own bitterness and rancour may, and, continued in, certainly will: rather let his want of grace give thee occasion to exercise thine, if thou hast any, in thinking and speaking better of him than he deserves: and, if thy charity proves mistaken, assure thyself that God will accept the charity, and overlook the mistake. But if in judging him whom thou hast nothing to do with, thou chancest to judge one way, and God and truth to judge another, take heed of that dreadful tribunal, where it will not be enough to say, that "I thought this," or "I heard that;" and, where no man's mistake will be able to warrant an unjust surmise, and much less justify a false censure. Such would find it much better for them to retreat inwards, and view themselves in the law of God and their own consciences; and that will tell them their own impartially, that will fetch off all their paint, and shew them a foul face in a true glass. Let them read over their catechism, and lay aside spite and virulence, gossipping and meddling, calumny and detraction; and let not all about them be villains and reprobates, because they themselves are envious and forlorn, idle and malicious: such vermin are to be looked upon by all sober Christians as the very cankers of society, and the shame of any religion; and so far from being fit to come to the sacrament, that really they are not fit to come to church; and would much better become the house of correction than the house of prayer.

Nevertheless, as custom in sin makes people

blind, and blindness makes them bold, none come more confidently to the sacrament than such wretches. But when I consider the pure and blessed body of our Saviour, passing through the open sepulchres of such throats, into the noisome receptacles of their boiling, fermenting breasts, it seems to me a lively, but sad representation of Christ's being first buried, and then descending into hell. Let this diabolical leaven therefore be purged out; and while such pretend to be so busy in cleansing their hearts, let them not forget to wash their mouths too.

Seventhly and lastly; As it is to be supposed that the pious communicant has all along carried on, so let him likewise in the issue close his preparatory work with reading and meditation. Of which, since the time will not serve me to speak more now, I shall only remark this, that they are duties of so near an import to the well-being of the soul, that the proper office of reading is, to take in its spiritual food, and of meditation, to digest it.

And now, I hope, that whosoever shall in the sincerity of his heart acquit himself as to all the foregoing duties, and thereby prepare and adorn himself to meet and converse with his Saviour at this divine feast, shall never be accosted with the thunder of that dreadful increpation from him, *Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment?*

But because I am very sensible that all the particular instances of duty, which may one way or other contribute to the fitting of men for this great one, can hardly be assigned, and much less equally and universally applied, where the conditions of men are so very different, I shall gather them all into

this one plain, full, and comprehensive rule; namely, That all those duties which common Christianity always obliges a Christian to, ought most eminently, and with an higher and more exalted pitch of devotion, to be performed by him before the sacrament; and convertibly, whatsoever duties divines prescribe to be observed by him with a peculiar fervour and application of mind upon this occasion, ought, in their proportion, to be practised by him through the whole course of his Christian conversation.

And this is a solid and sure rule; a rule that will never deceive or lurch the sincere communicant; a rule, that by adding discretion to devotion, will both keep him from being humoursome, singular, and phantastic in his preparations before the sacrament, and (which is worse, and must fatally unravel all again) from being, as most are, loose and remiss after it; and thinking, that as soon as the sacrament is over, their great business is done, whereas indeed it is but begun.

And now I fear, that as I have been too long upon the whole, so I have been but too brief upon so many, and those such weighty particulars. But I hope you will supply this defect, by enlarging upon them in your practice; and make up the omissions of the pulpit, by the meditations of the closet. And God direct and assist us all in so concerning a work.

To whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

The fatal Imposture and Force of Words:

SET FORTH IN

A SERMON

PREACHED ON ISAIAH V. 20.

MAY 9, 1686.

ISAIAH V. 20.

Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil, &c.

THESE words contain in them two things:

1. A wo denounced; and,

2. The sin for which it is denounced; to wit, *the calling evil good, and good evil:* which expression may be taken two ways:

First, In a judicial and more restrained sense; as it signifies the pronouncing of a guilty person innocent, and an innocent, guilty, in the course of judgment. But this I take to be too particular to reach the design of the words here.

Secondly, It may be taken in a general and more enlarged sense; as it imports a misrepresentation of the qualities of things and actions to the common apprehensions of men, abusing their minds with false notions, and so by this artifice making evil pass for good, and good for evil, in all the great concerns of life. Where, by *good*, I question not, but *good*

morally so called, *bonum honestum*, ought, chiefly at least, to be understood; and that the good of profit, or pleasure, the *bonum utile*, or *jucundum*, hardly come into any account here, as things extremely below the principal design of the Spirit of God in this place.

It is wonderful to consider, that, since *good* is the natural and proper object, which all human choice is carried out to; and *evil*, that which with all its might it shuns and flies from; and since withal there is that controlling worth and beauty in goodness, that, as such, the will cannot but like and desire it; and, on the other side, that odious deformity in vice, that it never so much as offers itself to the affections or practice of mankind, but under the disguise and colours of the other; and since all this is easily discernible by the ordinary discourses of the understanding; and lastly, since nothing passes into the choice of the will, but as it comes conveyed and warranted by the understanding, as worthy of its choice; I say, it is wonderful to consider, that, notwithstanding all this, the lives and practices of the generality of men (in which men certainly should be most in earnest) are almost wholly took up in a passionate pursuit of what is evil, and in an equal neglect, if not also an abhorrence, of what is good. This is certainly so; and experience, which is neither to be confuted nor denied, does every minute prove the sad truth of this assertion.

But now, what should be the cause of all this? For so great, so constant, and so general a practice must needs have, not only a cause, but also a great, a constant, and a general cause; a cause every way commensurate to such an effect: and this cause

must of necessity be from one of those two commanding powers of the soul, the understanding, or the will. As for the will; though its liberty be such, that a suitable or proper good being proposed to it, it has a power to refuse, or not to choose it; yet it has no power to choose evil, considered absolutely as evil; this being directly against the nature and natural method of its workings.

Nevertheless it is but too manifest, that things evil, extremely evil, are both readily chosen, and eagerly pursued and practised by it. And therefore this must needs be from that other governing faculty of the soul, the understanding, which represents to the will things really evil, under the notion and character of good. And this, this is the true source and original of this great mischief. The will chooses, follows, and embraces things evil and destructive; but it is because the understanding first tells it that they are good and wholesome, and fit to be chosen by it. One man gives another a cup of poison, a thing as terrible as death; but at the same time he tells him that it is a cordial; and so he drinks it off, and dies.

From the beginning of the world to this day, there was never any great villainy acted by men, but it was in the strength of some great fallacy put upon their minds by a false representation of evil for good, or good for evil. *In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*, says God to Adam; and so long as Adam believed this, he did not eat. But, says the devil, in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt be so far from *surely dying*, that thou shalt be immortal, and from a man grow into an angel; and upon this different account of

the thing, he presently took the fruit, and ate mortality, misery, and destruction to himself and his whole posterity.

And now, can there be a wo or curse in all the stores and magazines of vengeance, equal to the malignity of such a practice; of which one single instance could involve all mankind, past, present, and to come, in one universal and irreparable confusion? God commanded and told man what was good, but the devil surnamed it evil, and thereby baffled the command, turned the world topsyturvy, and brought a new chaos upon the whole creation.

But that I may give you a more full discussion of the sense and design of the words, I shall do it under these following particulars: as,

First, I shall give you some general account of the nature of good and evil, and the reason upon which they are founded.

Secondly, I shall shew that the way by which good and evil commonly operate upon the mind of man, is by those respective names or appellations by which they are notified and conveyed to the mind. And,

Thirdly and lastly, I shall shew the mischief, directly, naturally, and unavoidably following from the misapplication and confusion of those names.

And, I hope, by going over all these particulars, you may receive some tolerable satisfaction about this great subject which we have now before us.

1. And first for the nature of good and evil, what they are, and upon what they are founded. The knowledge of this I look upon as the foundation and groundwork of all those rules, that either moral philosophy or divinity can give for the direction of

the lives and practices of men; and consequently ought to be reckoned as a first principle; and that such an one, that, for ought I see, the through speculation of good, will be found much more difficult than the practice. But when we shall have once given some account of the nature of *good*, that of *evil* will be known by consequence; as being only a privation, or absence of good, in a subject capable of it, and proper for it.

Now *good*, in the general nature and notion of it, over and above the bare being of a thing, connotes also a certain suitableness or agreeableness of it to some other thing: according to which general notion of good, applied to the particular nature of moral goodness, (upon which only we now insist,) a thing or action is said to be morally good or evil, as it is agreeable or disagreeable to right reason, or to a rational nature; and as right reason is nothing else but the understanding or mind of man, discoursing and judging of things truly, and as they are in themselves; and as all truth is unchangeably the same; (that proposition which is true at any time being so for ever;) so it must follow, that the moral goodness or evil of men's actions, which consist in their conformity or unconformity to right reason, must be also eternal, necessary, and unchangeable. So that, as that which is right reason at any time, or in any case, is always right reason with relation to the same time and case; in like manner, that which is morally good or evil, at any time, or in any case, (since it takes its whole measure from right reason,) must be also eternally and unchangeably a moral good or evil, with relation to that time and to that case. For propositions concerning the good-

ness, as well as concerning the truth of things, are necessary and perpetual.

But you will say, may not the same action, as for instance, the killing of a man, be sometimes morally good, and sometimes morally evil? to wit, *good*, when it is the execution of justice upon a malefactor; and *evil*, when it is the taking away the life of an innocent person?

To this I answer, that this indeed is true of actions considered in their general nature or kind, but not considered in their particular individual instances. For generally speaking, to take away the life of a man, is neither morally good nor morally evil, but capable of being either, as the circumstances of things shall determine it; but every particular act of killing is of necessity accompanied with, and determined by, several circumstances, which actually and unavoidably constitute and denominate it either good or evil. And that which, being performed under such and such circumstances, is morally good, cannot possibly, under the same circumstances, ever be morally evil. And so on the contrary.

From whence we infer the villainous falsehood of two assertions, held and maintained by some persons, and too much countenanced by some others in the world. As,

First, That good and evil, honest and dishonest, are not qualities existing or inherent in things themselves; but only founded in the opinions of men concerning things. So that any thing or action, that has gained the general approbation of any people, or society of men, ought, in respect of those persons, to be esteemed morally good, or honest; and whatsoever falls under their general disapprobation,

ought, upon the same account, to be reckoned morally evil, or dishonest; which also they would seem to prove from the very signification of the word *honestus;* which, originally and strictly, signifies no more than creditable, and is but a derivative from *honor*, which signifies *credit* or *honour;* and according to the opinion of some, we know, that is lodged only in the esteem and thoughts of those who pay it, and not in the thing or person whom it is paid to. Thus for example; thieving or robbing was accounted amongst the Spartans a gallant, worthy, and a creditable thing; and consequently, according to the principle which we have mentioned, thievery, amongst the Spartans, was a practice morally good and honest. Thus also, both with the Grecians and the Romans, it was held a magnanimous and highly laudable act, for a man, under any great or insuperable misery or distress, to put an end to his own life; and accordingly, with those who had such thoughts of it, that which we call self-murder was properly a good, an honest, and a virtuous action. And persons of the highest and most acknowledged probity and virtue amongst them, such as Marcus Cato, and Pomponius Atticus, actually did it, and stand celebrated both by their orators and historians for so doing. And I could also instance in other actions of a fouler and more unnatural hue, which yet, from the approbation and credit they have found in some countries and places, have passed for good morality in those places: but, out of respect to common humanity, as well as divinity, I shall pass them over. And thus much for the first assertion or opinion.

Secondly, The second opinion, or position, is, that

good and evil, honest and dishonest, are originally founded in the laws and constitutions of the sovereign civil power, enjoining some things or actions, and prohibiting others. So that when any thing is found conducing to the welfare of the public, and thereupon comes to be enacted by governors into a law, it is forthwith thereby rendered morally good and honest; and, on the contrary, evil and dishonest, when, upon its contrariety to the public welfare, it stands prohibited and condemned by the same public authority.

This was the opinion heretofore of Epicurus, as it is represented by Gassendus; who understood his notions too well to misrepresent them. And lately of one amongst ourselves, a less philosopher, though the greater heathen of the two, the infamous author of the Leviathan. And the like lewd, scandalous, and immoral doctrine, or worse, if possible, may be found in some writers, of another kind of note and character; whom, one would have thought, not only religion, but shame of the world, might have taught better things.

Such as, for instance, Bellarmine himself; who, in his 4th book and 5th chapter *De Pontifice Romano*, has this monstrous passage: "That if the "pope should through error or mistake command "vices, and prohibit virtues, the church would be "bound in conscience to believe vice to be good, "and virtue evil." I shall give you the whole passage in his own words to a tittle: "Fides catholica "docet omnem virtutem esse bonam, omne vitium "esse malum. Si autem erraret papa, præcipiendo "vitia vel prohibendo virtutes, teneretur ecclesia "credere vitia esse bona et virtutes malas, nisi vellet

"contra conscientiam peccare." Good God! that any thing that wears the name of a Christian, or but of a man, should venture to own such a villainous, impudent, and blasphemous assertion in the face of the world, as this! What! must murder, adultery, theft, fraud, extortion, perjury, drunkenness, rebellion, and the like, pass for good and commendable actions, and fit to be practised? And mercy, chastity, justice, truth, temperance, loyalty, and sincere dealing, be accounted things utterly evil, immoral, and not to be followed by men, in case the pope, who is generally weak, and almost always a wicked man, should, by his mistake and infallible ignorance, command the former, and forbid the latter? Did Christ himself ever assume such a power as to alter the morality of actions, and to transform vice into virtue, and virtue into vice, by his bare word? Certainly never did a grosser paradox, or a wickeder sentence, drop from the mouth or pen of any mortal man, since reason or religion had any being in the world.

And, I must confess, I have often with great amazement wondered how it could possibly come from a person of so great a reputation, both for learning and virtue too, as the world allows Bellarmine to have been. But when men give themselves over to the defence of wicked interests and false propositions, it is just with God to smite the greatest abilities with the greatest infatuations.

But as for these two positions or assertions; That the moral good or evil, the honesty or dishonesty of human actions, should depend either upon the opinions or upon the laws of men; they are certainly false in themselves, because they are infinitely ab-

surd in their consequences. Some of which are such as these. As,

First, If the moral goodness or evil of men's actions were originally founded in, and so proceeded wholly from the opinions or laws of men, then it would follow, that they must change and vary according to the change and difference of the opinions and laws of men: and consequently, that the same action, under exactly the same circumstances, may be morally good one day, and morally evil another; and morally good in one place, and morally evil in another: forasmuch as the same sovereign authority may enact or make a law, commanding such or such an action to-day, and a quite contrary law forbidding the same action to-morrow; and the very same action, under the same circumstances, may be commanded by law in one country, and prohibited by law in another. Which being so, the consequence is manifest, and the absurdity of the consequent intolerable.

Secondly, If the moral goodness or evil of men's actions depended originally upon human laws, then those laws themselves could neither be morally good nor evil: the consequence is evident; because those laws are not commanded or prohibited by any antecedent human laws; and consequently, if the moral goodness or evil of any act were to be derived only from a precedent human law, laws themselves, not supposing a dependance upon other precedent human laws, could have no moral goodness or evil in them. Which to assert of any human act (such as all human laws essentially are and must be) is certainly a very gross absurdity.

Thirdly, If the moral goodness or evil of men's actions were sufficiently derived from human laws or constitutions, then, upon supposal that a divine law should (as it often does) command what is prohibited by human laws, and prohibit what is commanded by them, it would follow, that either such commands and prohibitions of the divine law do not at all affect the actions of men in point of their morality, so as to render them either good or evil; or that the same action, at the same time, may, in respect of the divine law commanding it, be morally good; and, in respect of an human law forbidding it, be morally evil. Than which consequence, nothing can be more clear, nor withal more absurd.

And many more of the like nature I could easily draw forth, and lay before you. Every false principle or proposition being sure to be attended with a numerous train of absurdities.

But, as to the subject-matter now in hand; so far is the morality of human actions, as to the goodness or evil of them, from being founded in any human law, that in very many, and those the principal instances of human action, it is not originally founded in, or derived from, so much as any positive divine law. There being a *jus naturale* certainly antecedent to all *jus positivum*, either human or divine; and that such as results from the very nature and being of things, as they stand in such a certain habitude or relation to one another: to which relation whatsoever is done agreeably is morally and essentially good; and whatsoever is done otherwise is, at the same rate, morally evil.

And this I shall exemplify in those two grand,

comprehensive, moral duties, which man is for ever obliged to, his duty towards God, and his duty towards his neighbour.

And first, for his duty towards God; which is, *to love and obey him with all his heart and all his soul.* It is certain, that for a rational, intelligent creature to conform himself to the will of God in all things, carries in it a moral rectitude, or goodness; and to disobey or oppose his will in any thing, imports a moral obliquity, before God ever deals forth any particular law or command to such a creature; there being a general obligation upon man to obey all God's laws, whensoever they shall be declared, before any particular instance of law comes actually to be declared. But now whence is this? Why, from that essential suitableness which obedience has to the relation which is between a rational creature and his Creator. Nothing in nature being more irrational and irregular, and consequently more immoral, than for an intelligent being to oppose or disobey that sovereign, supreme will, which gave him that being, and has withal the sole and absolute disposal of him in all his concerns. So that there needs no positive law or sanction of God to stamp an obliquity upon such a disobedience; since it cleaves to it essentially, and by way of natural result from it, upon the account of that utter unsuitableness which disobedience has to the relation which man naturally and necessarily stands in towards his Maker.

And then, in the next place, for his duty to his neighbour. The whole of which is comprised in that great rule, *of doing as a man would be done by.* We may truly affirm, that the morality of this

rule does not originally derive itself from those words of our Saviour, Matt. vii. 12. *Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them:* no, nor yet from Moses or the prophets; but it is as old as Adam, and bears date with human nature itself; as springing from that primitive relation of equality, which all men, as fellow creatures, and fellow subjects to the same supreme Lord, bear to one another, in respect of that common right, which every man has equally to his life, and to the proper comforts of life; and consequently, to all things naturally necessary to the support of both.

Now, whatsoever one man has a right to keep or possess, no other man can have a right to take from him. So that no man has a right to expect that from or to do that to another, which that other has not an equal right to expect from and to do to him. Which parity of right, as to all things purely natural, being undoubtedly the result of nature itself, can any thing be inferred from thence more conformable to reason, and consequently of a greater moral rectitude, than that such an equality of right should also cause an equality of behaviour, between man and man, as to all those mutual offices and intercourses in which life and the happiness of life are concerned? Nothing certainly can shine out and shew itself by the mere light of reason, as an higher and more unquestionable piece of morality than this, nor as a more confessed deviation from morality than the contrary practice.

From all which discourse, I think we may without presumption conclude, that the *rationes boni et mali*, the nature of good and evil, as to the principal

instances of both, spring from that essential habitude, or relation, which the nature of one thing bears to another by virtue of that order which they stand placed in, here in the world, by the very law and condition of their creation; and for that reason do and must precede all positive laws, sanctions, or institutions whatsoever. Good and evil are in morality, as the east and west are in the frame of the world; founded in and divided by that fixed and unalterable situation, which they have respectively in the whole body of the universe: or, as the right hand is discriminated from the left, by a natural, necessary, and never to be confounded distinction.

And thus I have done with the first thing proposed, and given you such an account of the nature of good and evil, as the measure of the present exercise and occasion would allow. Pass we now to the

2nd. Which is to shew, That the way by which good and evil generally operate upon the mind of man, is by those words or names by which they are notified and conveyed to the mind. Words are the signs and symbols of things; and as in accompts, ciphers and figures pass for real sums; so in the course of human affairs, words and names pass for things themselves. For things, or objects, cannot enter into the mind, as they subsist in themselves, and by their own natural bulk pass into the apprehension; but they are taken in by their ideas, their notions or resemblances; which imprinting themselves after a spiritual immaterial manner in the imagination, and from thence, under a further refinement, passing into the intellect, are by that expressed by certain words or names, found out and invented by the mind, for the communication of its

conceptions, or thoughts, to others. So that as conceptions are the images or resemblances of things to the mind within itself; in like manner are words, or names, the marks, tokens, or resemblances of those conceptions to the minds of them whom we converse with: τὰ ἐν τῇ φωνῇ τῶν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ παθημάτων σύμβολα, being the known maxim laid down by the philosopher, as the first and most fundamental rule of all discourse.

This therefore is certain, that in human life, or conversation, words stand for things; the common business of the world not being capable of being managed otherwise. For by these, men come to know one another's minds. By these they covenant and confederate. By these they buy and sell, they deal and traffick. In short, words are the great instruments both of practice and design; which, for the most part, move wholly in the strength of them. Forasmuch as it is the nature of man both to will and to do, according to the persuasion he has of the good and evil of those things that come before him; and to take up his persuasions according to the representations made to him of those qualities, by their respective names or appellations.

This is the true and natural account of this matter; and it is all that I shall remark upon this second head. I proceed now to the

3rd. Which is, to shew the mischief which directly, naturally, and unavoidably follows from the misapplication and confusion of those names. And in order to this, I shall premise these two considerations.

1. That the generality of mankind is wholly and absolutely governed by words or names; without,

nay, for the most part, even against the knowledge men have of things. The multitude, or common rout, like a drove of sheep, or an herd of oxen, may be managed by any noise or cry, which their drivers shall accustom them to.

And he who will set up for a skilful manager of the rabble, so long as they have but ears to hear, needs never inquire whether they have any understanding whereby to judge; but with two or three popular empty words, such as *popery and superstition, right of the subject, liberty of conscience, Lord Jesus Christ,* well tuned and humoured, may whistle them backwards and forwards, upwards and downwards, till he is weary; and get up upon their backs when he is so.

As for the meaning of the word itself, that may shift for itself: and as for the sense and reason of it, that has little or nothing to do here; only let it sound full and round, and chime right to the humour, which is at present agog, (just as a big, long, rattling name is said to command even adoration from a Spaniard,) and no doubt, with this powerful senseless engine, the rabble-driver shall be able to carry all before him, or to draw all after him, as he pleases. For a plausible, insignificant word, in the mouth of an expert demagogue, is a dangerous and a dreadful weapon.

You know, when Cæsar's army mutinied, and grew troublesome, no argument from interest or reason could satisfy or appease them: but as soon as he gave them the appellation of Quirites, the tumult was immediately hushed; and all were quiet and content, and took that one word in good payment for all. Such is the trivial slightness and levity

of most minds. And indeed, take any passion of the soul of man, while it is predominant and afloat, and, just in the critical height of it, nick it with some lucky or unlucky word, and you may as certainly overrule it to your own purpose, as a spark of fire, falling upon gunpowder, will infallibly blow it up.

The truth is, he who shall duly consider these matters, will find that there is a certain bewitchery, or fascination in words, which makes them operate with a force beyond what we can naturally give an account of. For would not a man think ill deeds and shrewd turns should reach further and strike deeper than ill words? And yet many instances might be given, in which men have much more easily pardoned ill things *done*, than ill things *said* against them: such a peculiar rancour and venom do they leave behind them in men's minds, and so much more poisonously and incurably does the serpent bite with his tongue than with his teeth.

Nor are men prevailed upon at this odd unaccountable rate, by bare words, only through a defect of knowledge; but sometimes also do they suffer themselves to be carried away with these puffs of wind, even contrary to knowledge and experience itself. For otherwise, how could men be brought to surrender up their reason, their interest, and their credit to flattery? gross, fulsome, abusive flattery; indeed more abusive and reproachful, upon a true estimate of things and persons, than the rudest scoffs and the sharpest invectives. Yet so it is, that though men know themselves utterly void of those qualities and perfections, which the impudent sycophant, at the same time, both ascribes to them, and in his sleeve laughs at them for believing; nay, though

they know that the flatterer himself knows the falsehood of his own flatteries; yet they swallow the fallacious morsel, love the impostor, and with both arms hug the abuse; and that to such a degree, that no offices of friendship, no real services, shall be able to lie in the balance against those luscious falsehoods, which flattery shall feed the mind of a fool in power with: the sweetness of the one infinitely overcomes the substance of the other.

And therefore you shall seldom see, that such an one cares to have men of worth, honesty, and veracity about him; for such persons cannot fall down and worship stocks and stones, though they are placed never so high above them; but their *yea* is *yea*, and their *nay*, *nay;* and they cannot admire a fox for his sincerity, a wolf for his generosity, nor an ass for his wit and ingenuity; and therefore can never be acceptable to those whose whole credit, interest, and advantage lies in their not appearing to the world what they are really in themselves. None are or can be welcome to such, but those who speak paint and wash; for that is the thing they love; and no wonder, since it is the thing they need.

There is hardly any rank, order, or degree of men, but, more or less, have been captivated and enslaved by words. It is a weakness, or rather a fate, which attends both high and low; the statesman who holds the helm, as well as the peasant who holds the plough. So that, if ever you find an ignoramus in place and power, and can have so little conscience, and so much confidence, as to tell him to his face, that he has a wit and an understanding above all the world besides; and "that what his own reason can-" not suggest to him, neither can the united reason

" of all mankind put together [a];" I dare undertake, that, as fulsome a dose as you give him, he shall readily take it down, and admit the commendation, though he cannot believe the thing: *Blanditiæ, etiam cum excluduntur, placent*, says Seneca. Tell him, that no history or antiquity can match his policies and his conduct; and presently the sot (because he knows neither history nor antiquity) shall begin to *measure himself by himself*, (which is the only sure way for him not to fall short,) and so immediately, amongst his outward admirers and his inward despisers, vouched also by a *teste meipso*, he steps forth an exact politician, and, by a wonderful and new way of arguing, proves himself no fool, because, forsooth, the sycophant who tells him so is an egregious knave.

But to give you yet a grosser instance of the force of words, and of the extreme vanity of man's nature in being influenced by them, hardly shall you meet with any person, man or woman, so aged or ill-favoured, but, if you will venture to commend them for their comeliness, nay, and for their youth too, though " time out of mind" is wrote upon every line of their face; yet they shall take it very well at your hands, and begin to think with themselves, that certainly they have some perfections which the generality of the world are not so happy as to be aware of.

But now, are not these, think we, strange self-delusions, and yet attested by common experience almost every day? But whence, in the mean time, can all this proceed, but from that besotting intoxication which this verbal magic, as I may so call it,

[a] The words of a great self-opiniator, and a bitter reviler of the clergy.

brings upon the mind of man? For can any thing in nature have a more certain, deep, and undeniable effect, than folly has upon man's mind, and age upon his body? And yet we see, that in both these, words are able to persuade men out of what they find and feel, to reverse the very impressions of sense, and to amuse men with fancies and paradoxes, even in spite of nature and experience. But since it would be endless to pursue all the particulars in which this humour shews itself; whosoever would have one full, lively, and complete view of an empty, shallow, self-opinioned grandee, surrounded by his flatterers, (like a choice dish of meat by a company of fellows commending and devouring it at the same time,) let him cast his eye upon Ahab in the midst of his false prophets, 1 Kings xxii. where we have them all with one voice for giving him a cast of their court-prophecy, and sending him, in a compliment, to be knocked on the head at Ramoth Gilead. But, says Jehoshaphat, (who smelt the parasite through the prophet,) in the seventh verse, *Is there not a prophet of the Lord besides, that we may inquire of him? Why, yes,* says Ahab, *there is yet one man by whom we may inquire of the Lord; but I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.* Ay! that was his crime; the poor man was so good a subject, and so bad a courtier, as to venture to serve and save his prince, whether he would or no; for, it seems, to give Ahab such warning as might infallibly have prevented his destruction, was esteemed by him evil; and to push him on headlong into it, because he was fond of it, was accounted good. These were his new measures of good and evil. And therefore those who knew how to *make their court*

better, (as the word is,) tell him a bold lie in God's name, and therewith send him packing to his certain doom; thus calling evil good at the cost of their prince's crown and his life too. But what cared they? they knew that it would please, and that was enough for them; there being always a sort of men in the world, (whom others have an interest to serve by,) who had rather a great deal be pleased, than be safe. Strike them under the fifth rib, provided at the same time you kiss them too, as Joab served Abner, and you may both destroy and oblige them with the same blow.

Accordingly, in the thirtieth of Isaiah, we find some arrived to that pitch of sottishness, and so much in love with their own ruin, as to own plainly and roundly what they would be at; in the tenth verse, *Prophesy not unto us*, say they, *right things, but prophesy to us smooth things.* As if they had said, "Do but oil the razor for us, and let us alone "to cut our own throats." Such an enchantment is there in words; and so fine a thing does it seem to some to be ruined plausibly, and to be ushered to their destruction with panegyric and acclamation: a shameful, though irrefragable argument, of the absurd empire and usurpation of words over things; and that the greatest affairs and most important interests of the world are carried on by things, not as they are, but as they are called.

And thus much for the first thing which I thought necessary to premise to the prosecution of our third particular.

2. The other thing to be premised is this; That as the generality of men are wholly governed by names and words; so there is nothing, in which they are so

remarkably and powerfully governed by them, as in matters of good and evil, so far as these qualities relate to, and affect the actions of, men: a thing certainly of a most fatal and pernicious import. For though, in matters of mere speculation, it is not much the concern of society, whether or no men proceed wholly upon trust, and take the bare word of others for what they assent to; since it is not much material to the welfare either of government or of themselves, whether they opine right or wrong, and whether they be philosophers or no. But it is vastly the concern both of government and of themselves too, whether they be morally good or bad, honest or dishonest. And surely it is hardly possible for men to make it their business to be virtuous or honest, while vices are called and pointed out to them by the names of virtues; and they all the while suppose the nature of things to be truly and faithfully signified by their names, and thereupon believe as they hear, and practise as they believe. And that this is the course of much the greatest part of the world, thus to take up their persuasions concerning good and evil by an implicit faith, and a full acquiescence in the word of those who shall represent things to them under these characters, I shall prove by two reasons; and those such as, I fear, will not only be found reasons to evince that men actually do so, but also sad demonstrations to conclude that they are never like to do otherwise.

First, The first of which shall be taken from that similitude, neighbourhood, and affinity, which is between vice and virtue, good and evil, in several notable instances of each. For though the general natures and definitions of these qualities are suf-

ficiently distant from one another, and so in no danger of a promiscuous confusion; yet when they come to subsist in particulars, and to be clothed and attended with several accidents and circumstances, the case is hereby much altered; for then the discernment is neither so easy, nor yet so certain. Thus it is not always so obvious to distinguish between an act of liberality and an act of prodigality; between an act of courage and an act of rashness; an act of pusillanimity, and an act of great modesty or humility: nay, and some have had the good luck to have their very dulness dignified with the name of *gravity*, and to be no small gainers by the mistake. And many more such actions of dubious quality might be instanced in, too numerous to be here recounted or insisted on. In all which, and the like, it requiring too great a sagacity for vulgar minds to draw the line nicely and exactly between vice and virtue, and to adjust the due limits of each; it is no wonder, if most men attempt not a laborious scrutiny into things themselves, but only take names and words as they first come, and so without any more ado rest in them; it being so much easier, in all disquisitions of truth, to suppose, than to prove; and to believe, than to distinguish.

Secondly, The other reason of the same shall be taken from the great and natural inability of most men to judge exactly of things; which makes it very difficult for them to discern the real good and evil of what comes before them; to consider and weigh circumstances, to scatter and look through the mists of error, and so separate appearances from realities. For the greater part of mankind is but slow and dull of apprehension; and therefore, in many cases,

under a necessity of seeing with other men's eyes, and judging with other men's understandings. Nature having manifestly contrived things so, that the vulgar and the many are fit only to be led or driven, but by no means fit to guide or direct themselves.

To which their want of judging or discerning abilities, we may add also their want of leisure and opportunity to apply their minds to such a serious and attent consideration, as may let them into a full discovery of the true goodness and evil of things, which are qualities which seldom display themselves to the first view: for in most things good and evil lie shuffled and thrust up together in a confused heap; and it is study and intention of thought which must draw them forth, and range them under their distinct heads. But there can be no study without time; and the mind must abide and dwell upon things, or be always a stranger to the inside of them. *Through desire*, says Solomon, *a man having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom*, Prov. xviii. 1. There must be leisure and a retirement, solitude, and a sequestration of a man's self from the noise and toil of the world: for truth scorns to be seen by eyes too much fixed upon inferior objects. It lies too deep to be fetched up with the plough, and too close to be beaten out with the hammer. It dwells not in shops or workhouses; nor till the late age was it ever known, that any one served seven years to a smith or a tailor, that he might at the end thereof proceed master of any other arts, but such as those trades taught him; and much less that he should commence doctor or divine from the shopboard or the anvil; or from

whistling to a team, come to preach to a congregation.

These were the peculiar, extraordinary privileges of the late blessed times of light and inspiration: otherwise nature will still hold on in its old course, never doing any thing which is considerable, without the assistance of its two great helps, art and industry. But above all, the knowledge of what is good and what is evil, what ought and what ought not to be done, in the several offices and relations of life, is a thing too large to be compassed, and too hard to be mastered, without brains and study, parts and contemplation; which providence never thought fit to make much the greatest part of mankind possessors of. And consequently those who are not so, must, for the knowledge of most things, depend upon those who are, and receive their information concerning good and evil from such verbal or nominal representations of each, as shall be imparted to them by those, whose ability and integrity they have cause to rely upon, for a faithful account of these matters.

And thus from these two great considerations premised; 1st, That the generality of the world are wholly governed by words and names; and 2dly, That the chief instance in which they are so, is in such words and names as import the good or evil of things; (which both the difficulty of things themselves, and the very condition of human nature, constrains much the greatest part of mankind to take wholly upon trust;) I say, from these two considerations must needs be inferred, what a fatal, devilish, and destructive effect the misapplication and confusion of

those great governing names of *good* and *evil*, must inevitably have upon the societies of men. The comprehensive mischief of which will appear from this, that it takes in both those ways, by which the greatest evils and calamities, which are incident to man, do directly break in upon him.

The first of which is by his being deceived, and the second by his being misrepresented. And first, for the first of these. I do not in the least doubt, but if a true and just computation could be made of all the miseries and misfortunes that befall men in this world, two thirds of them, at least, would be found resolvable into their being deceived by false appearances of good; first deluding their apprehensions, and then by natural consequence perverting their actions, from which are the great issues of life and death; since, according to the eternal sanction of God and nature, such as a man's actions are for good or evil, such ought also his condition to be for happiness or misery.

Now all deception in the course of life is indeed nothing else but a lie reduced to practice, and falsehood passing from words into things.

For is a man impoverished and undone by the purchase of an estate? Why, it is because he bought an imposture, paid down his money for a lie, and by the help of the best and ablest counsel, forsooth, that could be had, took a bad title for a good.

Is a man unfortunate in marriage? Still it is because he was deceived; and put his neck into the snare, before he put it into the yoke, and so took that for virtue and affection, which was nothing but vice in a disguise, and a devilish humour under a demure look.

Is he again unhappy and calamitous in his friendships? Why, in this also, it is because he built upon the air, and trod upon a quicksand, and took that for kindness and sincerity, which was only malice and design, seeking an opportunity to ruin him effectually, and to overturn him in all his interests by the sure but fatal handle of his own good nature and credulity.

And lastly, is a man betrayed, lost, and blown by such agents and instruments as he employs in his greatest and nearest concerns? Why, still the cause of it is from this, that he misplaced his confidence, took hypocrisy for fidelity, and so relied upon the services of a pack of villains, who designed nothing but their own game, and to stake him, while they played for themselves.

But not to mention any more particulars, there is no estate, office, or condition of life whatsoever, but groans and labours under the killing truth of what we have asserted.

For it is this which supplants not only private persons, but kingdoms and governments, by keeping them ignorant of their own strengths and weaknesses; and it is evident that governments may be equally destroyed by an ignorance of either. For the weak, by thinking themselves strong, are induced to venture and proclaim war against that which ruins them: and the strong, by conceiting themselves weak, are thereby rendered as unactive, and consequently as useless, as if they really were so. In Luke xiv. 31, when *a king with ten thousand is to meet a king coming against him with twenty thousand*, our Saviour advises him, before he ventures the issue of a battle, *to sit down and consider*. But now a

false glozing parasite would give him quite another kind of counsel, and bid him only reckon his ten thousand forty, call his fool-hardiness valour, and then he may go on boldly, because blindly, and by mistaking himself for a lion, come to perish like an ass.

In short, it is this great plague of the world, deception, which takes wrong measures, and makes false musters almost in every thing; which sounds a retreat instead of a charge, and a charge instead of a retreat; which overthrows whole armies; and sometimes by one lying word treacherously cast out, turns the fate and fortune of states and empires, and lays the most flourishing monarchies in the dust. A blind guide is certainly a great mischief; but a guide that blinds those whom he should lead, is undoubtedly a much greater.

Secondly, The other great and undoing mischief which befalls men upon the forementioned account is, by their being misrepresented. Now as by calling evil good, a man is misrepresented to himself in the way of flattery; so by calling good evil, he is misrepresented to others in the way of slander and detraction. I say detraction, that killing, poisoned arrow drawn out of the devil's quiver, which is always flying abroad, and doing execution in the dark; against which no virtue is a defence, no innocence a security. For as by flattery a man is usually brought to open his bosom to his mortal enemy; so by detraction, and a slanderous misreport of persons, he is often brought to shut the same even to his best and truest friends. In both cases he receives a fatal blow, since that which lays a man open to

an enemy, and that which strips him of a friend, equally attacks him in all those interests, that are capable of being weakened by the one, and supported by the other.

The most direct and efficacious way to ruin any man, is to misrepresent him; and it often so falls out, that it wounds on both sides, and not only mauls the person misrepresented, but him also to whom he is misrepresented: for if he be great and powerful, (as spies and pickthanks seldom apply to any others,) it generally provokes him through mistake to persecute and tyrannise over; nay, and sometimes even to dip his hands in the blood of the innocent and the just, and thereby involve himself in such a guilt, as shall arm heaven and earth against him, the vengeance of God, and the indignation of men; who will both espouse the quarrel of a bleeding innocence, and heartily join forces against an insulting baseness, especially when backed with greatness, and set on by misinformation. Histories are full of such examples.

Besides that, it is rarely found, that men hold their greatness for term of life; though their baseness, for the most part, they do; and then, according to the common vicissitude and wheel of things, the proud and the insolent must take their turn too; and after long trampling upon others, come at length, *plaudente et gaudente mundo*, to be trampled upon themselves. For, as Tully has it in his oration for Milo, *non semper viator a latrone, nonnunquam etiam latro a viatore occiditur.*

But to pass from particulars to communities, nothing can be imagined more destructive to society

than this villainous practice. For it robs the public of all that benefit and advantage, that it may justly claim and ought to receive from the worth and virtue of particular persons, by rendering their virtue utterly insignificant. For good itself can do no good, while it passes for evil; and an honest man is, in effect, useless, while he is accounted a knave. Both things and persons subsist by their reputation.

An unjust sentence from a tribunal may condemn an innocent person, but misrepresentation condemns innocence itself. For it is this which revives and imitates that unhuman barbarity of the old heathen persecutors, wrapping up Christians in the skins of wild beasts, that so they might be worried and torn in pieces by dogs. Do but paint an angel black, and that is enough to make him pass for a devil. "Let "us blacken him, let us blacken him what we can," said that miscreant Harrison[a] of the blessed king, upon the wording and drawing up his charge against his approaching trial. And when any man is to be run down, and sacrificed to the lust of his enemies, as that royal martyr was, even his *good* (according to the apostle's phrase) *shall be evil spoken of.* He must first be undermined, and then undone. The practice is usual, and the method natural. But, to give you the whole malice of it in one word, it is a weapon forged in hell, and formed by the prime artificer and engineer of all mischief, the devil; and none

[a] A preaching colonel of the parliament-army, and a chief actor in the murder of king Charles the First; notable before for having killed several after quarter given them by others, and using these words in the doing it; *Cursed be he who does the work of the Lord negligently.* He was by extraction a butcher's son; and accordingly, in his practices all along, more a butcher than his father.

but that God who knows all things, and can do all things, can protect the best of men against it.

To which God, the fountain of all good, and the hater of all evil, be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

Prevention of Sin an unvaluable Mercy:

OR

A SERMON

PREACHED UPON THAT SUBJECT

ON 1 SAM. XXV. 32, 33.

AT CHRIST-CHURCH, OXON. NOVEMBER 10, 1678.

1 SAM. XXV. 32, 33.

And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me:
And blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand.

THESE words are David's retractation, or laying down of a bloody and revengeful resolution; which, for a while, his heart had swelled with, and carried him on with the highest transport of rage to prosecute. A resolution took up from the sense of a gross indignity and affront passed upon him, in recompence of a signal favour and kindness received from him. For during his exile and flight before Saul, in which he was frequently put to all the hardships which usually befall the weak flying before the strong; there happening a great and solemn festivity, such as the sheep-shearings used to be in those eastern countries, he condescends, by an honourable and kind message, to beg of a rich and great man

some small repast and supply for himself and his poor harassed companions, at that notable time of joy and feasting: a time that might make any thing that looked like want or hunger, no less an absurdity than a misery to all that were round about him. And, as if the greatness of the asker, and the smallness of the thing asked, had not been sufficient to enforce his request, he adds a commemoration of his own generous and noble usage of the person whom he thus addressed to; shewing how that he had been a wall and a bulwark to all that belonged to him, a safeguard to his estate, and a keeper of his flocks; and that both from the violence of robbers, and the licence of his own soldiers; who could much more easily have carved themselves their own provisions, than so great a spirit stoop so low as to ask them.

But in answer to this, (as nothing is so rude and insolent as a wealthy rustic,) all this his kindness is overlooked, his request rejected, and his person most unworthily railed at. Such being the nature of some base minds, that they can never do ill turns but they must double them with ill words too. And thus David's messengers are sent back to him like so many sharks and runagates, only for endeavouring to compliment an ill nature out of itself; and seeking that by petition, which they might have commanded by their sword.

And now, who would not but think, that such ungrateful usage, heightened with such reproachful language, might warrant the justice of the sharpest revenge; even of such a revenge as now began to boil and burn in the breast of this great warrior? For surely, if any thing may justly call up the ut-

most of a man's rage, it should be bitter and contumelious words from an unprovoked inferior; and if any thing can legalize revenge, it should be injuries from an extremely obliged person. But for all this, revenge, we see, is so much the prerogative of the Almighty, so absolutely the peculiar of Heaven, that no consideration whatsoever can empower even the best men to assume the execution of it in their own case. And therefore David, by an happy and seasonable pacification, being took off from acting that bloody tragedy which he was just now entering upon, and so turning his eyes from the baseness of him who had stirred up his revenge, to the goodness of that God who had prevented it; he breaks forth into these triumphant praises and doxologies expressed in the text: *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who has kept me this day from shedding blood, and from avenging myself with my own hand.*

Which words, together with those going before in the same verse, naturally afford us this doctrinal proposition, which shall be the subject of the following discourse: namely, That prevention of sin is one of the greatest mercies that God can vouchsafe a man in this world.

The prosecution of which shall lie in these two things: first, to prove the proposition; secondly, to apply it.

And first, for the proof of it: the transcendent greatness of this sin-preventing mercy is demonstrable from these four following considerations.

1. Of the condition which the sinner is in, when this mercy is vouchsafed him.

2. Of the principle or fountain from whence this prevention of sin does proceed.

3. Of the hazard a man runs, if the commission of sin be not prevented, whether ever it will come to be pardoned: and,

4thly and lastly, Of the advantages accruing to the soul from the prevention of sin, above what can be had from the bare pardon of it, in case it comes to be pardoned.

Of these in their order: and first, we are to take an estimate of the greatness of this mercy, from the condition it finds the sinner in, when God is pleased to vouchsafe it to him. It finds him in the direct way to death and destruction; and, which is worse, wholly unable to help himself. For he is actually under the power of a temptation, and the sway of an impetuous lust; both hurrying him on to satisfy the cravings of it by some wicked action. He is possessed and acted by a passion, which, for the present, absolutely overrules him; and so can no more recover himself, than a bowl rolling down a hill stop itself in the midst of its career. It is a maxim in the philosophy of some, that whatsoever is once in actual motion, will move for ever, if it be not hindered.

So a man, being under the drift of any passion, will still follow the impulse of it, till something interpose, and by a stronger impulse turn him another way: but in this case we can find no principle within him strong enough to counteract that principle, and to relieve him. For if it be any, it must be either, first, the judgment of his reason; or, secondly, the free choice of his will.

But from the first of these there can be no help for him in his present condition. For while a man is engaged in any sinful purpose, through the pre-

valence of any passion, during the continuance of that passion, he fully approves of whatsoever he is carried on to do in the strength of it; and judges it, under his present circumstances, the best and most rational course that he can take. Thus we see when Jonas was under the passion of anger, and God asked him, *Whether he did well to be angry?* He answered, *I do well to be angry, even unto death*, Jonas iv. 9. And when Saul was under his persecuting fit, what he did appeared to him good and necessary, Acts xxvi. 9. *I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus.* But to go no further than the text; do we not think, that while David's heart was full of his revengeful design, it had blinded and perverted his reason so far, that it struck in wholly with his passion, and told him, that the bloody purpose he was going to execute, was just, magnanimous, and most becoming such a person, and so dealt with, as he was? This being so, how is it possible for a man under a passion to receive any succour from his judgment or reason, which is made a party in the whole action, and influenced to a present approbation of all the ill things which his passion can suggest? This is most certain; and every man may find it by experience, (if he will but impartially reflect upon the method of his own actings, and the motions of his own mind,) that while he is under any passion, he thinks and judges quite otherwise of the proper objects of that passion, from what he does when he is out of it. Take a man under the transports of a vehement rage or revenge, and he passes a very different judgment upon murder and bloodshed, from what he does when his re-

venge is over, and the flame of his fury spent. Take a man possessed with a strong and immoderate desire of any thing, and you shall find, that the worth and excellency of that thing appears much greater and more dazzling to the eye of his mind, than it does when that desire, either by satisfaction or otherwise, is quite extinguished. So that while passion is upon the wing, and the man fully engaged in the prosecution of some unlawful object, no remedy or control is to be expected from his reason, which is wholly gained over to judge in favour of it. The fumes of his passion do as really intoxicate and confound his judging and discerning faculty, as the fumes of drink discompose and stupify the brain of a man overcharged with it. When his drink indeed is over, he sees the folly and the absurdity, the madness and the vileness of those things, which before he acted with full complacency and approbation. Passion is the drunkenness of the mind; and therefore, in its present workings, not controllable by reason; forasmuch as the proper effect of it is, for the time, to supersede the workings of reason. This principle therefore being able to do nothing to the stopping of a man in the eager pursuit of his sin; there remains no other, that can be supposed able to do any thing upon the soul, but that second mentioned, to wit, the choice of his will. But this also is as much disabled from recovering a man fully intent upon the prosecution of any of his lusts, as the former. For all the time that a man is so, he absolutely wills, and is fully pleased with what he is designing or going about. And whatsoever perfectly pleases the will, overpowers it; for it fixes and determines the inclination of it to that one

thing which is before it; and so fills up all its possibilities of indifference, that there is actually no room for choice. He who is under the power of melancholy, is pleased with his being so. He who is angry, delights in nothing so much as in the venting of his rage. And he who is lustful, places his greatest satisfaction in a slavish following of the dictates of his lust. And so long as the will and the affections are pleased, and exceedingly gratified in any course of acting, it is impossible for a man, so far as he is at his own disposal, not to continue in it; or, by any principle within him, to be diverted or took off from it.

From all which we see, that when a man has took up a full purpose of sinning, he is hurried on to it in the strength of all those principles which nature has given him to act by: for sin having depraved his judgment, and got possession of his will, there is no other principle left him naturally, by which he can make head against it. Nor is this all; but to these internal dispositions to sin, add the external opportunities and occasions concurring with them, and removing all lets and rubs out of the way, and, as it were, making the path of destruction plain before the sinner's face; so that he may run his course freely, and without interruption. Nay, when opportunities shall lie so fair, as not only to permit, but even to invite, and further a progress in sin; so that the sinner shall set forth, like a ship launched into the wide sea; not only well built and rigged, but also carried on with full wind and tide, to the port or place it is bound for: surely, in this case, nothing under heaven can be imagined able to stop or countermand a sinner,

amidst all these circumstances promoting and pushing on his sinful design. For all that can give force and fury to motion, both from within and from without, jointly meet to bear him forward in his present attempt. He presses on like an horse rushing into the battle, and all that should withstand him giving way before him.

Now under this deplorable necessity of ruin and destruction does God's preventing grace find every sinner, when it *snatches him like a brand out of the fire*, and steps in between the purpose and the commission of his sin. It finds him going on resolutely in the high and broad way to perdition; which yet his perverted reason tells him is right, and his will, pleasant. And therefore he has no power of himself to leave, or turn out of it; but he is ruined jocundly and pleasantly, and damned according to his heart's desire. And can there be a more wretched and woful spectacle of misery, than a man in such a condition? a man pleasing and destroying himself together? a man, as it were, doing violence to damnation, and taking hell by force? So that when the preventing goodness of God reaches out its arm, and pulls him out of this fatal path, it does by main force even wrest him from himself, and save him, as it were, against his will.

But neither is this his total inability to recover or relieve himself the worst of his condition; but, which is yet much worse, it puts him into a state of actual hostility against, and defiance of, that almighty God, from whom alone, in this helpless and forlorn condition, he is capable of receiving help. For surely, while a man is going on in a full purpose of sin, he is trampling upon all law, spitting in the

face of Heaven, and provoking his Maker in the highest manner; so that none is or can be so much concerned as God himself, to destroy and cut off such an one, and to vindicate the honour of his great name, by striking him dead in his rebellion. And this brings us to the

Second thing proposed; which was to shew, What is the fountain or impulsive cause of this prevention of sin. It is perfectly free grace. A man at best, upon all principles of divinity and sound philosophy, is uncapable of meriting any thing from God. But surely, while he is under the dominion of sin, and engaged in full design and purpose to commit it, it is not imaginable what can be found in him to oblige the divine grace in his behalf. For he is in high and actual rebellion against the only giver of such grace. And therefore it must needs flow from a redundant, unaccountable fulness of compassion; shewing mercy, because it will shew mercy; from a compassion, which is and must be its own reason, and can have no argument for its exercise, but itself. No man in the strength of the first grace can merit the second, (as some fondly speak, for reason they do not,) unless a beggar, by receiving one alms, can be said to merit another. It is not from what a man is, or what he has done; from any virtue or excellency, any preceding worth or desert in him, that God is induced thus to interpose between him and ruin, and so stop him in his full career to damnation. No, says God, in Ezek. xvi. 6. *When I passed by, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee, Live; yea, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live.* The Spirit of God speaks this great truth to the hearts of men

with emphasis and repetition, knowing what an aptness there is in them to oppose it. God sees a man wallowing in his native filth and impurity, delivered over as an absolute captive to sin, polluted with its guilt, and enslaved by its power; and in this most loathsome condition fixes upon him as an object of his distinguishing mercy. And to shew yet further, that the actings of this mercy in the work of prevention are entirely free, do we not sometimes see, in persons of equal guilt and demerit, and of equal progress and advance in the ways of sin, some of them maturely diverted and took off, and others permitted to go on without check or control, till they finish a sinful course in final perdition? So true is it, that if things were cast upon this issue, that God should never prevent sin till something in man deserved it, the best of men would fall into sin, continue in sin, and sin on for ever.

And thus much for the second thing proposed; which was to shew, What was the principle, or fountain, from whence this prevention of sin does proceed. Come we now to the

Third demonstration or proof of the greatness of this preventing mercy, taken from the hazard a man runs, if the commission of sin be not prevented, whether ever it will come to be pardoned.

In order to the clearing of which, I shall lay down these two considerations.

1. That if sin be not thus prevented, it will certainly be committed; and the reason is, because on the sinner's part there will be always a strong inclination to sin. So that, if other things concur, and Providence cuts not off the opportunity, the act of sin must needs follow. For an active principle,

seconded with the opportunities of action, will infallibly exert itself.

2dly, The other consideration is, That in every sin deliberately committed, there are (generally speaking) many more degrees of probability, that that sin will never come to be pardoned, than that it will.

And this shall be made appear upon these three following accounts.

1. Because every commission of sin introduces into the soul a certain degree of hardness, and an aptness to continue in that sin. It is a known maxim, that it is much more difficult to throw out, than not to let in. Every degree of entrance is a degree of possession. Sin taken into the soul is like a liquor poured into a vessel; so much of it as it fills, it also seasons. The touch and tincture go together. So that although the body of the liquor should be poured out again, yet still it leaves that tang behind it, which makes the vessel fitter for that, than for any other. In like manner, every act of sin strangely transforms and works over the soul to its own likeness. Sin in this being to the soul like fire to combustible matter; it assimilates, before it destroys it.

2dly, A second reason is, because every commission of sin imprints upon the soul a further disposition and proneness to sin. As the second, third, and fourth degrees of heat are more easily introduced, than the first. Every one is both a preparative and a step to the next. Drinking both quenches the present thirst, and provokes it for the future. When the soul is beaten from its first station, and the mounds and outworks of virtue are once broken

down, it becomes quite another thing from what it was before. In one single eating of the forbidden fruit, when the act is over, yet the relish remains; and the remembrance of the first repast is an easy allurement to the second. One visit is enough to begin an acquaintance; and this point is gained by it, that when the visitant comes again, he is no more a stranger.

3dly, The third and grand reason is, because the only thing that can entitle the sinner to pardon, which is repentance, is not in the sinner's power: and he who goes about the work will find it so. It is the gift of God: and though God has certainly promised forgiveness of sin to every one who repents, yet he has not promised to any one to give him grace to repent. This is the sinner's hard lot, that the same thing which makes him need repentance, makes him also in danger of not obtaining it. For it provokes and offends that holy Spirit which alone can bestow this grace: as the same treason which puts a traitor in need of his prince's mercy, is a great and a just provocation to his prince to deny it him.

Now, let these three things be put together: First, That every commission of sin, in some degree, hardens the soul in that sin. Secondly, That every commission of sin disposes the soul to proceed further in sin. And, thirdly, That to repent, and turn from sin, (without which all pardon is impossible,) is not in the sinner's power; and then, I suppose, there cannot but appear a greater likelihood, that a sin once committed will in the issue not be pardoned, than that it will. To all which, add the confirmation of general experience, and the real event of things, that where one man ever comes to repent, an hundred, I

might say a thousand at least, end their days in final impenitence.

All which considered, surely there cannot need a more pregnant argument of the greatness of this preventing mercy, if it did no more for a man than this; that his grand, immortal concern, more valuable to him than ten thousand worlds, is not thrown upon a critical point; that he is not brought to his last stake; that he is rescued from the first descents into hell, and the high probabilities of damnation.

For whatsoever the issue proves, it is certainly a miserable thing to be forced to cast lots for one's life; yet in every sin, a man does the same for eternity. And therefore let the boldest sinner take this one consideration along with him, when he is going to sin, that, whether the sin he is about to act ever comes to be pardoned or no, yet, as soon as it is acted, it quite turns the balance, puts his salvation upon the venture, leaves him but one cast for all; and, which is yet much more dreadful, makes it ten to one odds against him.

But let us now alter the state of the matter, so as to leave no doubt in the case: but suppose, that the sin, which, upon non-prevention, comes to be committed, comes also to be repented of, and consequently to be pardoned. Yet, in the

Fourth and last place, The greatness of this preventing mercy is eminently proved from those advantages accruing to the soul from the prevention of sin, above what can be had from the bare pardon of it: and that, in these two great respects.

1. Of the clearness of a man's condition.

2. Of the satisfaction of his mind. And,

First, For the clearness of his condition. If inno-

cence be preferable to repentance, and to be clean be more desirable than to be cleansed; then surely prevention of sin ought to have the precedence of its pardon. For so much of prevention, so much of innocence. There are indeed various degrees of it; and God, in his infinite wisdom, does not deal forth the same measure of his preventing grace to all. Sometimes he may suffer the soul but just to begin the sinful production, in reflecting upon a sin, suggested by the imagination, with some complacency and delight; which, in the apostle's phrase, is to *conceive sin;* and then, in these early, imperfect beginnings, God perhaps may presently dash and extinguish it. Or possibly he may permit the sinful conception to receive life and form, by passing into a purpose of committing it; and then he may make it prove abortive, by stifling it before ever it comes to the birth. Or perhaps God may think fit to let it come even *to the birth,* by some strong endeavours to commit it, and yet then deny it *strength to bring forth;* so that it never comes into actual commission. Or, lastly, God may suffer it to be born, and see the world, by permitting the endeavour of sin to pass into the commission of it. And this is the last fatal step but one; which is, by frequent repetition of the sinful act, to continue and persist in it, till at length it settles into a fixed, confirmed habit of sin; which, being properly that which the apostle calls the *finishing of sin,* ends certainly in *death;* death, not only as to merit, but also as to actual infliction.

Now peradventure in this whole progress, preventing grace may sometimes come in to the poor sinner's help, but *at the last hour of the day;* and having suffered him to run all the former risk and

maze of sin, and to descend so many steps downwards to the black regions of death: as first, from the bare thought and imagination of sin, to look upon it with some beginnings of appetite and delight; from thence, to purpose and intend it; and from intending, to endeavour it; and from endeavouring, actually to commit it; and, having committed it, perhaps for some time to continue in it: and then, I say, after all this, God may turn the fatal stream, and by a mighty grace interrupt its course, and keep it from passing into a settled habit, and so hinder the absolute completion of sin in final obduracy.

Certain it is, that wheresoever it pleases God to stop the sinner on this side hell, how far soever he has been advanced in his way towards it, it is a vast, ineffable mercy; a mercy as great as life from the dead, and salvation to a man tottering with horror upon the very edge and brink of destruction. But if, more than all this, God shall be pleased by an early grace to prevent sin so soon, as to keep the soul in the virginity of its first innocence, not tainted with the desires, and much less defloured with the formed purpose of any thing vile and sinful; what an infinite goodness is this! It is not a converting, but a crowning grace; such an one as irradiates, and puts a circle of glory about the head of him upon whom it descends; it is the Holy Ghost coming down upon him *in the form of a dove*, and setting him triumphant above the necessity of tears and sorrow, mourning and repentance, the sad after-games of a lost innocence. And this brings in the consideration of that other great advantage accruing to the soul from the prevention of sin, above what can be had from the bare pardon of it; namely,

2. The satisfaction of a man's mind. There is that true joy, that solid and substantial comfort, conveyed to the heart by preventing grace, which pardoning grace, at the best, very seldom, and, for the most part, never gives. For since all joy passes into the heart through the understanding, the object of it must be known by one, before it can affect the other. Now, when grace keeps a man so within his bounds, that sin is prevented, he certainly knows it to be so; and so rejoices upon the firm, infallible ground of sense and assurance. But, on the other side, though grace may have reversed the condemning sentence, and sealed the sinner's pardon before God, yet it may have left no transcript of that pardon in the sinner's breast. The hand-writing against him may be cancelled in the court of heaven, and yet the indictment run on in the court of conscience. So that a man may be safe as to his condition, but in the mean time dark and doubtful as to his apprehensions; secure in his pardon, but miserable in the ignorance of it; and so, passing all his days in the disconsolate, uneasy vicissitudes of hopes and fears, at length go out of the world, not knowing whither he goes. And what is this, but a black cloud drawn over all a man's comforts? a cloud, which, though it cannot hinder the supporting influence of heaven, yet will be sure to intercept the refreshing light of it. The pardoned person must not think to stand upon the same vantage ground with the innocent. It is enough that they are both equally safe; but it cannot be thought, that, without a rare privilege, both can be equally cheerful. And thus much for the advantageous effects of preventing, above those of pardoning grace; which was the fourth and last argument brought for the

proof of the proposition. Pass we now to the next general thing proposed for the prosecution of it; namely,

2. Its application. Which, from the foregoing discourse, may afford us several useful deductions; but chiefly by way of information, in these three following particulars. As,

First, This may inform and convince us how vastly greater a pleasure is consequent upon the forbearance of sin, than can possibly accompany the commission of it; and how much higher a satisfaction is to be found from a conquered, than from a conquering passion. For the proof of which, we need look no further than the great example here before us. Revenge is certainly the most luscious morsel that the devil can put into the sinner's mouth. But do we think that David could have found half that pleasure in the execution of his revenge, that he expresses here upon the disappointment of it? Possibly it might have pleased him in the present heat and hurry of his rage, but must have displeased him infinitely more in the cool, sedate reflections of his mind. For sin can please no longer, than for that pitiful space of time while it is committing; and surely the present pleasure of a sinful act is a poor countervail for the bitterness of the review, which begins where the action ends, and lasts for ever. There is no ill thing which a man does in his passion, but his memory will be revenged on him for it afterwards.

All pleasure springing from a gratified passion (as most of the pleasure of sin does) must needs determine with that passion. It is short, violent, and fallacious; and as soon as the imagination is dis-

abused, will certainly be at an end. And therefore Des Cartes prescribes excellently well for the regulation of the passions; *viz.* That a man should fix and fore-arm his mind with this settled persuasion, that, during that commotion of his blood and spirits, in which passion properly consists, whatsoever is offered to his imagination in favour of it, tends only to deceive his reason. It is indeed a real trepan upon it; feeding it with colours and appearances, instead of arguments; and driving the very same bargain, which Jacob did with Esau, a mess of pottage for a birthright, a present repast for a perpetuity.

Secondly, We have here a sure, unfailing criterion, by which every man may discover and find out the gracious or ungracious disposition of his own heart. The temper of every man is to be judged of from the thing he most esteems; and the object of his esteem may be measured by the prime object of his thanks. What is it that opens thy mouth in praises, that fills thy heart, and lifts up thy hands in grateful acknowledgments to thy great Creator and Preserver? Is it that thy bags and thy barns are full, that thou hast escaped this sickness, or that danger? Alas, God may have done all this for thee in anger! All this fair sunshine may have been only to harden thee in thy sins. He may have given thee riches and honour, health and power with a curse; and if so, it will be found but a poor comfort, to have had never so great a share of God's bounty without his blessing.

But has he at any time kept thee from thy sin? stopped thee in the prosecution of thy lust? defeated the malicious arts and stratagems of thy mortal enemy the tempter? And does not the sense of

this move and affect thy heart more than all the former instances of temporal prosperity, which are but, as it were, the promiscuous scatterings of his common providence, while these are the distinguishing kindnesses of his special grace?

A truly pious mind has certainly another kind of relish and taste of these things; and if it receives a temporal blessing with gratitude, it receives a spiritual one with ecstasy and transport. David, an heroic instance of such a temper, overlooks the rich and seasonable present of Abigail, though pressed with hunger and travel; but her advice, which disarmed his rage, and calmed his revenge, draws forth those high and affectionate gratulations from him: *Blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, who hast kept me this day from shedding blood, and avenging myself with mine own hand.* These were his joyful and glorious trophies; not that he triumphed over his enemy, but that he insulted over his revenge; that he escaped from himself, and was delivered from his own fury. And whosoever has any thing of David's piety, will be perpetually plying the throne of grace with such like acknowledgments; as, "Blessed be that Providence, which de- "livered me from such a lewd company, and such a "vicious acquaintance, which was the bane of such "and such a person. And, Blessed be that God "who cast rubs, and stops, and hinderances in my "way, when I was attempting the commission of "such or such a sin; who took me out of such a "course of life, such a place, or such an employment, "which was a continual snare and temptation to "me. And, Blessed be such a preacher, and such a "friend, whom God made use of to speak a word in

" season to my wicked heart, and so turned me out " of the paths of death and destruction, and saved " me in spite of the world, the devil, and myself."

These are such things as a man shall remember with joy upon his deathbed; such as shall cheer and warm his heart even in that last and bitter agony, when many, from the very bottom of their souls, shall wish that they had never been rich, or great, or powerful; and reflect with anguish and remorse upon those splendid occasions of sin, which served them for little but to heighten their guilt, and at best to inflame their accounts, at that great tribunal which they are going to appear before.

In the third and last place. We learn from hence the great reasonableness of, not only a contented, but also a thankful acquiescence in any condition, and under the crossest and severest passages of Providence which can possibly befall us: since there is none of all these but may be the instrument of preventing grace in the hands of a merciful God, to keep us from those courses which would otherwise assuredly end in our confusion. This is most certain, that there is no enjoyment which the nature of man is either desirous or capable of, but may be to him a direct inducement to sin, and consequently is big with mischief, and carries death in the bowels of it. But to make the assertion more particular, and thereby more convincing, let us take an account of it with reference to the three greatest and deservedly most valued enjoyments of this life.

1. Health; 2dly, Reputation; and 3dly, Wealth.

First, And first for health. Has God made a breach upon that? Perhaps he is building up thy soul upon the ruins of thy body. Has he bereaved

thee of the use and vigour of thy limbs? Possibly he saw that otherwise they would have been the instruments of thy lusts, and the active ministers of thy debaucheries. Perhaps thy languishing upon thy bed has kept thee from rotting in a gaol, or in a worse place. God saw it necessary by such mortifications to quench the boilings of a furious, overflowing appetite, and the boundless rage of an insatiable intemperance; to make the weakness of the flesh, the physic and restaurative of the spirit; and in a word, rather to save thee diseased, sickly, and deformed, than to let strength, health, and beauty, drive thee headlong (as they have done many thousands) into eternal destruction.

Secondly, Has God in his providence thought fit to drop a blot upon thy name, and to blast thy reputation? He saw perhaps that the breath of popular air was grown infectious, and would have derived a contagion upon thy better part. Pride and vainglory had mounted thee too high, and therefore it was necessary for mercy to take thee down, to prevent a greater fall. *A good name is*, indeed, *better than life;* but a sound mind is better than both. Praise and applause had swelled thee to a proportion ready to burst; it had vitiated all thy spiritual appetites, and brought thee to feed upon the air, and to surfeit upon the wind, and, in a word, to starve thy soul, only to pamper thy imagination.

And now if God makes use of some poignant disgrace to prick this enormous bladder, and to let out the poisonous vapour, is not the mercy greater than the severity of the cure? *Cover them with shame*, says the psalmist, *that they may seek thy name.* Fame and glory transports a man out of himself;

and, like a violent wind, though it may bear him up for a while, yet it will be sure to let him fall at last. It makes the mind loose and garish, scatters the spirits, and leaves a kind of dissolution upon all the faculties. Whereas shame, on the contrary, as all grief does, naturally contracts and unites, and thereby fortifies the spirits, fixes the ramblings of fancy, and so reduces and gathers the man into himself. This is the sovereign effect of a bitter potion, administered by a wise and merciful hand: and what hurt can there be in all the slanders, obloquies, and disgraces of this world, if they are but the arts and methods of Providence to shame us into the glories of the next. But then,

Thirdly and lastly, Has God thought fit to cast thy lot amongst the poor of this world, and that either by denying thee any share of the plenties of this life, which is something grievous; or by taking them away, which is much more so? Yet still all this may be but the effect of preventing mercy. For so much mischief as riches have done and may do to the souls of men, so much mercy may there be in taking them away. For does not the wisest of men, next our Saviour, tell us of *riches kept to the hurt of the owners of them?* Eccles. v. 13. And does not our Saviour himself speak of the intolerable difficulty which they cause in men's passage to heaven? Do they not make the *narrow way* much narrower, and contract *the gate which leads to life* to the straitness of a *needle's eye?*

And now, if God will fit thee for this passage, by taking off thy load, and emptying thy bags, and so suit the narrowness of thy fortune to the narrowness of the way thou art to pass, is there any thing but

mercy in all this? Nay, are not the riches of his mercy conspicuous in the poverty of thy condition?

Thou who repinest at the plenty and splendour of thy neighbour, at the greatness of his incomes, and the magnificence of his retinue; consider what are frequently the dismal, wretched consequences of all this, and thou wilt have little cause to envy this gaudy great one, or to wish thyself in his room.

For do we not often hear of this or that young heir newly come to his father's vast estate? An happy man, no doubt! But does not the town presently ring of his debaucheries, his blasphemies, and his murders? Are not his riches and his lewdnesses talked of together? and the odiousness of one heightened and set off by the greatness of the other? Are not his oaths, his riots, and other villainies reckoned by as many thousands as his estate?

Now consider, had this grand debauchee, this glistering monster, been born to thy poverty and mean circumstances, he could not have contracted such a clamorous guilt, he could not have been so bad: nor, perhaps, had thy birth instated thee in the same wealth and greatness, wouldest thou have been at all better.

This God foresaw and knew, in the ordering both of his and thy condition: and which of the two now, can we think, is the greater debtor to his preventing mercy? Lordly sins require lordly estates to support them: and where Providence denies the latter, it cuts off all temptation to the former.

And thus I have shewn by particular instances, what cause men have to acquiesce in and submit to the harshest dispensations that Providence can measure out to them in this life; and with what satis-

faction, or rather gratitude, that ought to be endured, by which the greatest of mischiefs is prevented. The great physician of souls sometimes cannot cure without cutting us. Sin has festered inwardly, and he must lance the imposthume, to let out death with the suppuration. He who ties a madman's hands, or takes away his sword, loves his person, while he disarms his phrensy. And whether by health or sickness, honour or disgrace, wealth or poverty, life or death, mercy is still contriving, acting, and carrying on the spiritual good of all those who love God, and are loved by him.

To whom, therefore, be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

An Account of the Nature and Measures of Conscience:

IN

TWO SERMONS

ON 1 JOHN III. 21.

PREACHED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY,

AT CHRIST-CHURCH, OXON.

The first preached on the 1st of Nov. 1691.

1 JOHN iii. 21.

Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, we have confidence toward God.

AS nothing can be of more moment, so few things, doubtless, are of more difficulty, than for men to be rationally satisfied about the estate of their souls, with reference to God and the great concerns of eternity. In their judgment about which, if they err finally, it is like a man's missing his cast when he throws dice for his life; his being, his happiness, and all that he does or can enjoy in the world, is involved in the error of one throw. And therefore it may very well deserve our best skill and care, to inquire into those rules, by which we may guide our judgment in so weighty an affair, both with safety and success. And this, I think, cannot be better done, than by separating the false and fallacious from the true and certain. For if the rule we judge

by be uncertain, it is odds but we shall judge wrong; and if we should judge right, yet it is not properly skill, but chance; not a true judgment, but a lucky hit: which, certainly, the eternal interests of an immortal soul are of much too high a value to be left at the mercy of.

First of all then: he who would pass such a judgment upon his condition, as shall be ratified in heaven, and confirmed at that great tribunal from which there lies no appeal, will find himself wofully deceived, if he judges of his spiritual estate by any of these four following measures: as,

1. The general esteem of the world concerning him. He who owes his piety to fame and hearsay, and the evidences of his salvation to popular voice and opinion, builds his house not only upon the sand, but, which is worse, upon the wind; and writes the deeds, by which he holds his estate, upon the face of a river. He makes a bodily eye the judge of things impossible to be seen; and humour and ignorance (which the generality of men both think and speak by) the great proofs of his justification. But surely no man has the estate of his soul drawn upon his face, nor the decree of his election wrote upon his forehead. He who would know a man throughly, must follow him into the closet of his heart, the door of which is kept shut to all the world besides, and the inspection of which is only the prerogative of omniscience.

The favourable opinion and good word of men, (to some persons especially,) comes oftentimes at a very easy rate: and by a few demure looks and affected whines, set off with some odd, devotional postures and grimaces, and such other little arts of

dissimulation, cunning men will do wonders, and commence presently heroes for sanctity, self-denial, and sincerity, while within perhaps they are as proud as Lucifer, as covetous as Demas, as false as Judas; and, in the whole course of their conversation, act and are acted, not by devotion, but design.

So that, for ought I see, though the Mosaical part of Judaism be abolished amongst Christians, the Pharisaical part of it never will. A grave, staunch, skilfully managed face, set upon a grasping, aspiring mind, having got many a sly formalist the reputation of a primitive and severe piety, forsooth, and made many such mountebanks pass admired, even for saints upon earth, (as the word is,) who are like to be so nowhere else.

But a man who had never seen the stately outside of a tomb, or painted sepulchre, before, may very well be excused, if he takes it rather for the repository of some rich treasure, than of a noisome corpse; but should he but once open and rake into it, though he could not see, he would quickly smell out his mistake. The greatest part of the world is nothing but appearance, nothing but shew and surface; and many make it their business, their study, and concern, that it should be so; who, having for many years together deceived all about them, are at last willing to deceive themselves too; and by a long, immemorial practice, and, as it were, prescription of an aged, thoroughpaced hypocrisy, come at length to believe that for a reality, which, at the first practice of it, they themselves knew to be a cheat. But if men love to be deceived and fooled about so great an interest as that of their spiritual estate, it must be confessed that they cannot take a surer and more effectual

course to be so, than by taking their neighbour's word for that which can be known to them only from their own hearts. For certainly it is not more absurd to undertake to tell the name of an unknown person by his looks, than to vouch a man's saintship from the vogue of the world, founded upon his external behaviour.

2. The judgment of any casuist, or learned divine, concerning the estate of a man's soul, is not sufficient to give him confidence towards God. And the reason is, because no learning whatsoever can give a man the knowledge of another's heart. Besides, that it is more than possible that the most profound and experienced casuist in the world may mistake in his judgment of a man's spiritual condition; and if he does judge right, yet the man cannot be sure that he will declare that judgment sincerely and impartially, (the greatest clerks being not always the honestest, any more than the wisest men,) but may purposely sooth a man up for hope or fear, or the service of some sinister interest; and so shew him the face of a foul soul in a flattering glass: considering how much the raising in some men a false hope of another world, may, with others, serve a real interest in this.

There is a generation of men, who have framed their casuistical divinity to a perfect compliance with all the corrupt affections of a man's nature; and by that new-invented engine of the doctrine of probability, will undertake to warrant and quiet the sinner's conscience in the commission of any sin whatsoever, provided there be but the opinion of one learned man to vouch it. For this, they say, is a sufficient ground for the conscience of any unlearned

person to rely and to act upon. So that if but one doctor asserts that I may lawfully kill a man to prevent a box on the ear, or a calumny, by which he would otherwise asperse my good name, I may with a good conscience do it; nay, I may safely rest upon this one casuist's judgment, though thousands, as learned as himself, yea, and the express law of God besides, affirm the quite contrary. But these spiritual engineers know well enough how to deal with any commandment, either by taking or expounding it away, at their pleasure.

Such an ascendant have these Romish casuists over scripture, reason, and morality; much like what is said of the stupid, modern Jews, that they have subdued their sense and reason to such a sottish servitude to their rabbies, as to hold, that in case two rabbies should happen to contradict one another, they were yet bound to believe the contradictory assertions of both to be equally certain, and equally the word of God: such an iron-digesting faith have they, and such pity it is, that there should be no such thing in Judaism as transubstantiation to employ it upon.

But as for these casuists whom I have been speaking of; if the judgment of one doctor may authorize the practice of any action, I believe it will be hard to find any sort or degree of villainy which the corruption of man's nature is capable of committing, which shall not meet with a defence. And of this I could give such an instance from something wrote by a certain prelate of theirs, cardinal and archbishop of Beneventum, as were enough, not only to astonish all pious ears, but almost to unconsecrate the very church I speak in.

But the truth is, the way by which these Romish casuists speak peace to the consciences of men, is either by teaching them that many actions are not sins, which yet really are so; or by suggesting something to them, which shall satisfy their minds, notwithstanding a known, actual, avowed continuance in their sins: such as are their pardons and indulgences, and giving men a share in the saints' merits, out of the common bank and treasury of the church, which the pope has the sole custody and disposal of, and is never kept shut to such as come with an open hand. So that according to these new evangelists, well may we pronounce, Blessed are the rich, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. But God deliver the world from such guides, or rather such hucksters of souls, the very shame of religion, and the shameless subverters of morality. And it is really matter both of wonder and indignation, that such impostors should at all concern themselves about rules or directions of conscience, who seem to have no consciences to apply them to.

3. The absolution pronounced by a priest, whether Papist or Protestant, is not a certain, infallible ground, to give the person so absolved confidence towards God; and the reason is, because, if absolution, as such, could of itself secure a man, as to the estate of his soul, then it would follow, that every person so absolved should, by virtue thereof, be *ipso facto* put into such a condition of safety, which is not imaginable.

For the absolution pronounced must be either conditional, as running upon the conditions of faith and repentance; and then, if those conditions are not found in the person so absolved, it is but a seal to a

blank, and so a mere nullity to him. Or, the absolution must be pronounced in terms absolute and unconditional: and if so, then the said absolution becomes valid and effectual, either by virtue of the state of the person to whom it was pronounced, as being a true penitent, or by virtue of the *opus operatum*, or bare action itself of the priest absolving him. If it receives its validity from the former; then it is clear, that although it runs in forms absolute, yet it is indeed conditional, as depending upon the qualification of the person to whom it is pronounced; who therefore owes the remission of his sins, not properly to the priest's absolution, but to his own repentance, which made that absolution effectual, and would undoubtedly have saved him, though the priest had never absolved him.

But if it be asserted, that the very action of the priest absolving him has of itself this virtue; then we must grant also, that it is in the priest's power to save a man who never repented, nor did one good work in all his life; forasmuch as it is in his power to perform this action upon him in full form, and with full intention to absolve him. But the horrible absurdity, blasphemy, and impiety of this assertion, sufficiently proclaims its falsity without any further confutation.

In a word, if a man be a penitent, his repentance stamps his absolution effectual. If not, let the priest repeat the same absolution to him ten thousand times, yet for all his being absolved in this world, God will condemn him in the other. And consequently, he who places his salvation upon this ground, will find himself like an imprisoned and condemned malefactor, who in the night dreams that he is re-

leased, but in the morning finds himself led to the gallows.

4thly and lastly, No advantages from external church-membership, or profession of the true religion, can themselves give a man confidence towards God. And yet perhaps, there is hardly any one thing in the world, which men, in all ages, have generally more cheated themselves with. The Jews were an eminent instance of this: who, because they were the sons of Abraham, as it is readily acknowledged by our Saviour, John viii. 37. *and because they were entrusted with the oracles of God,* Rom. iii. 2. *together with the covenants, and the promises,* Rom. ix. 4. that is, in other words, because they were the true church, and professors of the true religion, (while all the world about them lay wallowing in ignorance, heathenism, and idolatry,) they concluded from hence, that God was so fond of them, that, notwithstanding all their villainies and immoralities, they were still the darlings of heaven, and the only heirs apparent of salvation. They thought, it seems, God and themselves linked together in so fast, but withal so strange a covenant, that, although they never performed their part of it, God was yet bound to make good every tittle of his.

And this made John the Baptist set himself with so much acrimony and indignation to baffle this senseless, arrogant conceit of theirs, which made them huff at the doctrine of repentance, as a thing below them, and not at all belonging to them, in Matt. iii. 9. *Think not,* says he, *to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father.* This, he knew, lay deep in their hearts, and was still in their mouths, and kept them insolent and impeni-

tent under sins of the highest and most clamorous guilt; though our Saviour himself also, not long after this, assured them, that they were of a very different stock and parentage from that which they boasted of; and that whosoever was their father upon the natural account, the devil was certainly so upon a moral.

In like manner, how vainly do the Romanists pride and value themselves upon the name of *Catholics*, of the *catholic religion*, and of the *catholic church!* though a title no more applicable to the church of Rome, than a man's finger, when it is swelled and putrefied, can be called his whole body: a church which allows salvation to none without it, nor awards damnation to almost any within it. And therefore, as the former empty plea served the sottish Jews; so, no wonder, if this equally serves these, to put them into a fool's paradise, by feeding their hopes without changing their lives; and, as an excellent expedient, first to assure them of heaven, and then to bring them easily to it; and so, in a word, to save both their souls and their sins too.

And to shew how the same cheat runs through all professions, though not in the same dress; none are more powerfully and grossly under it than another sort of men, who, on the contrary, place their whole acceptance with God, and indeed their whole religion, upon a mighty zeal, or rather outcry, against popery and superstition; verbally, indeed, uttered against the church of Rome, but really against the church of England. To which sort of persons I shall say no more but this, and that in the spirit of truth and meekness; namely, that zeal and noise against popery, and real services

for it, are no such inconsistent things as some may imagine; indeed no more than invectives against Papists, and solemn addresses of thanks to them, for that very thing, by which they would have brought in popery upon us. And if those of the separation do not yet know so much, thanks to them for it, we of the church of England do; and so may they themselves too, in due time. I speak not this by way of sarcasm, to reproach them, (I leave that to their own consciences, which will do it more effectually,) but by way of charity, to warn them: for let them be assured, that this whole scene and practice of theirs is as really superstition, and as false a bottom to rest their souls upon, as either the Jews alleging Abraham for their father, while the devil claimed them for his children; or the Papists relying upon their indulgences, their saints' merits and supererogations, and such other fopperies, as can never settle, nor indeed so much as reach, the conscience; and much less recommend it to that Judge, who is not to be flammed off with words, and phrases, and names, though taken out of the scripture itself.

Nay, and I shall proceed yet further. It is not a man's being of the church of England itself, (though undoubtedly the purest and best reformed church in the world; indeed so well reformed, that it will be found a much easier work to alter than to better its constitution;) I say, it is not a man's being even of this excellent church, which can of itself clear accounts between God and his conscience. Since bare communion with a good church can never alone make a good man: for if it could, I am sure we should have no bad ones in ours; and much less such as would betray it.

So that we see here, that it is but too manifest, that men of all churches and persuasions are strangely apt to flatter and deceive themselves with what they believe, and what they profess; and if we throughly consider the matter, we shall find the fallacy to lie in this: that those religious institutions, which God designed only for means, helps, and advantages, to promote and further men in the practice of holiness, they look upon rather as a privilege to serve them instead of it, and really to commute for it. This is the very case, and a fatal self-imposture it is certainly, and such an one as defeats the design and destroys the force of all religion.

And thus I have shewn four several uncertain and deceitful rules, which men are prone to judge of their spiritual estate by.

But now, have we any better or more certain, to substitute and recommend in the room of them? Why, yes; if we believe the apostle, a man's own heart or conscience is that which, above all other things, is able to give him confidence towards God. And the reason is, because the heart knows that by itself, which nothing in the world besides can give it any knowledge of; and without the knowledge of which, it can have no foundation to build any true confidence upon. Conscience, under God, is the only competent judge of what the soul has done, and what it has not done; what guilt it has contracted, and what it has not; as it is in 1 Cor. ii. 11. *What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?* Conscience is its own counsellor, the sole master of its own secrets: and it is the privilege of our nature, that every man should keep the key of his own breast.

Now for the further prosecution of the words, I shall do these four things.

1. I shall shew, how the heart or conscience ought to be informed, in order to its founding in us a rational confidence towards God.

2. I shall shew, how and by what means we may get it thus informed, and afterwards preserve and keep it so.

3. I shall shew, whence it is that the testimony of conscience thus informed, comes to be so authentic, and so much to be relied upon: and,

4thly and lastly, I shall assign some particular cases or instances, in which the confidence suggested by it does most eminently shew and exert itself.

1. And first for the first of these, how the heart or conscience, &c. It is certain, that no man can have any such confidence towards God, only because his heart tells him a lie; and that it may do so, is altogether as certain. For there is the erroneous, as well as the rightly informed conscience; and if the conscience happens to be deluded, and thereupon to give false directions to the will, so that by virtue of those directions it is betrayed into a course of sin: sin does not therefore cease to be sin, because a man committed it conscientiously. If conscience comes to be perverted so far, as to bring a man under a persuasion, that it is either lawful, or his duty, to resist the magistrate, to seize upon his neighbour's just rights or estate, to worship stocks and stones, or to lie, equivocate, and the like, this will not absolve him before God; since error, which is in itself evil, can never make another thing good. He who does an unwarrantable action through a

false information, which information he ought not to have believed, cannot in reason make the guilt of one sin the excuse of another.

Conscience therefore must be rightly informed, before the testimony of it can be authentic in what it pronounces concerning the estate of the soul. It must proceed by the two grand rules of right reason and scripture; these are the compass which it must steer by. For conscience comes formally to oblige, only as it is the messenger of the mind of God to the soul of man; which he has revealed to him, partly by the impression of certain notions and maxims upon the practical understanding, and partly by the declared oracles of his word. So far therefore as conscience reports any thing agreeable to, or deducible from these, it is to be hearkened to as the great conveyer of truth to the soul; but when it reports any thing dissonant to these, it obliges no more than the falsehood reported by it.

But since there is none who follows an erroneous conscience, but does so because he thinks it true; and moreover thinks it true, because he is persuaded that it proceeds according to the two forementioned rules of scripture and right reason; how shall a man be able to satisfy himself, when his conscience is rightly informed, and when possessed with an error? For to affirm, that the sentence passed by a rightly informed conscience gives a man a rational confidence towards God; but, in the mean time, not to assign any means possible by which he may know when his conscience is thus rightly informed, and when not, it must equally bereave him of such a confidence, as placing the condition upon which it depends wholly out of his knowledge.

Here therefore is the knot, here the difficulty, how to state some rule of certainty, by which infallibly to distinguish when the conscience is right, and to be relied upon; when erroneous, and to be distrusted, in the testimony it gives about the sincerity and safety of a man's spiritual condition.

For the resolution of which, I answer, that it is not necessary for a man to be assured of the rightness of his conscience, by such an infallible certainty of persuasion, as amounts to the clearness of a demonstration; but it is sufficient, if he knows it upon grounds of such a convincing probability, as shall exclude all rational grounds of doubting of it. For I cannot think, that the confidence here spoken of rises so high as to assurance. And the reason is, because it is manifestly such a confidence as is common to all sincere Christians; which yet, assurance, we all know, is not.

The truth is, the word in the original, which is παῤῥησία, signifies properly *freedom* or *boldness of speech*; though the Latin translation renders it by *fiducia*, and so corresponds with the English, which renders it *confidence*. But whether *fiducia* or *confidence* reaches the full sense of παῤῥησία, may very well be disputed. However it is certain, that neither the word in the original, nor yet in the translation, imports *assurance*. For *freedom* or *boldness of speech*, I am sure, does not; and *fiducia*, or *confidence*, signifies only a man's being actually persuaded of a thing, upon better arguments for it, than any that he can see against it; which he may very well be, and yet not be assured of it.

From all which, I conclude; that the confidence here mentioned in the text amounts to no more

than a rational well-grounded hope. Such an one as the apostle tells us, in Rom. v. 5. *maketh not ashamed.*

And upon these terms, I affirm, that such a conscience, as has employed the utmost of its ability to give itself the best information and clearest knowledge of its duty that it can, is a rational ground for a man to build such an hope upon; and, consequently, for him to confide in.

There is an innate light in every man, discovering to him the first lines of duty, in the common notions of good and evil, which, by cultivation and improvement, may be advanced to higher and brighter discoveries. And from hence it is, that the schoolmen and moralists admit not of any *ignorantia juris,* speaking of natural moral right, to give excuse to sin. Since all such ignorance is voluntary, and therefore culpable, forasmuch as it was in every man's power to have prevented it, by a due improvement of the light of nature, and the seeds of moral honesty sown in his heart.

If it be here demanded, whether a man may not remain ignorant of his duty, after he has used the utmost means to inform himself of it; I answer, that so much of duty as is absolutely necessary to save him, he shall upon the use of such a course come to know; and that which he continues ignorant of, having done the utmost lying in his power that he might not be ignorant of it, shall never damn him. Which assertion is proved thus: The gospel damns nobody for being ignorant of that which he is not obliged to know; but that which upon the improvement of a man's utmost power he cannot know, he is not obliged to know; for that

otherwise he would be obliged to an impossibility; since that which is out of the compass of any man's power, is to that man impossible.

He therefore who exerts all the powers and faculties of his soul, and plies all means and opportunities in the search of truth, which God has vouchsafed him, may rest upon the judgment of his conscience so informed, as a warrantable guide of those actions, which he must account to God for. And if by following such a guide, he falls into the ditch, the ditch shall never drown him, or if it should, the man perishes not by his sin, but by his misfortune. In a word, he who endeavours to know the utmost of his duty that he can, and practises the utmost that he knows, has the equity and goodness of the great God to stand as a mighty wall or rampart between him and damnation, for any errors or infirmities, which the frailty of his condition has invincibly, and therefore inculpably, exposed him to.

And if a conscience thus qualified and informed, be not the measure by which a man may take a true estimate of his absolution before the tribunal of God, all the understanding of human nature cannot find out any ground for the sinner to pitch the sole of his foot upon, or rest his conscience with any assurance, but is left in the plunge of infinite doubts and uncertainties, suspicions and misgivings, both as to the measures of his present duty, and the final issues of his future reward.

Let this conclusion therefore stand as the firm result of the foregoing discourse, and the foundation of what is to follow; that such a conscience as has not been wanting to itself, in endeavouring to get the utmost and clearest information about the will of

God, that its power, advantages, and opportunities could afford it, is that internal judge, whose absolution is a rational and sure ground of confidence towards God: and so I pass to the second thing proposed. Which is to shew, How, and by what means, we may get our heart or conscience thus informed, and afterwards preserve and keep it so.

In order to which, amongst many things that might be alleged as highly useful, and conducing to this great work, I shall insist upon these four: as,

1. Let a man carefully attend to the voice of his reason, and all the dictates of natural morality, so as by no means to do any thing contrary to them. For though reason is not to be relied upon, as a guide universally sufficient to direct us what to do, yet it is generally to be relied upon and obeyed, where it tells us what we are not to do. It is indeed but a weak and diminutive light, compared to revelation; but it ought to be no disparagement to a star, that it is not a sun. Nevertheless, as weak and as small as it is, it is a light always at hand, and though enclosed, as it were, in a dark lantern, may yet be of singular use to prevent many a foul step, and to keep us from many a dangerous fall. And every man brings such a degree of this light into the world with him, that though it cannot bring him to heaven, yet, if he be true to it, it will carry him a great way; indeed so far, that if he follows it faithfully, I doubt not but he shall meet with another light, which shall carry him quite through.

How far it may be improved, is evident from that high and refined morality which shined forth both in the lives and writings of some of the ancient

heathens, who yet had no other light but this, both to live and to write by. For how great a man in virtue was Cato, of whom the historian gives this glorious character; *Esse quam videri bonus malebat!* And of what an impregnable integrity was Fabricius, of whom it was said, that a man might as well attempt to turn the sun out of his course, as to bring Fabricius to do a base or a dishonest action! And then for their writings; what admirable things occur in the remains of Pythagoras, and the books of Plato, and of several other philosophers! short, I confess, of the rules of Christianity, but generally above the lives of Christians.

Which being so, ought not the light of reason to be looked upon by us as a rich and a noble talent, and such an one as we must account to God for? for it is certainly from him. It is a ray of divinity darted into the soul. *It is the candle of the Lord,* as Solomon calls it, and God never lights us up a candle either to put out or to sleep by. If it be made conscious to a work of darkness, it will not fail to discover and reprove it; and therefore the checks of it are to be revered, as the echo of a voice from heaven; for, whatsoever conscience binds here on earth, will be certainly bound there too; and it were a great vanity to hope or imagine, that either law or gospel will absolve what natural conscience condemns. No man ever yet offended his own conscience, but first or last it was revenged upon him for it. So that it will concern a man to treat this great principle awfully and warily, by still observing what it commands, but especially what it forbids: and if he would have it always a faithful and sincere monitor to him, let him be sure never

to turn a deaf ear to it; for not to hear it is the way to silence it. Let him strictly observe the first stirrings and intimations; the first hints and whispers of good and evil, that pass in his heart; and this will keep conscience so quick and vigilant, and ready to give a man true alarms upon the least approach of his spiritual enemy, that he shall be hardly capable of a great surprise.

On the contrary, if a man accustoms himself to slight or pass over these first motions to good, or shrinkings of his conscience from evil, which originally are as natural to the heart of man, as the appetites of hunger and thirst are to the stomach, conscience will by degrees grow dull and unconcerned, and, from not spying out motes, come at length to overlook beams; from carelessness it shall fall into a slumber, and from a slumber it shall settle into a deep and long sleep; till at last perhaps it sleeps itself into a lethargy, and that such an one, that nothing but hell and judgment shall be able to awaken it. For long disuse of any thing made for action will in time take away the very use of it. As I have read of one, who having for a disguise kept one of his eyes a long time covered, when he took off the covering, found his eye indeed where it was, but his sight was gone. He who would keep his conscience awake, must be careful to keep it stirring.

2. Let a man be very tender and regardful of every pious motion and suggestion made by the Spirit of God to his heart. I do not hereby go about to establish enthusiasm, or such fantastic pretences of intercourse with God, as Papists and fanatics (who in most things copy from one another, as well

as rail at one another) do usually boast of. But certainly, if the evil spirit may, and often does suggest wicked and vile thoughts to the minds of men, as all do and must grant, and is sufficiently proved from the *devil's putting it into the heart of Judas to betray Christ*, John xiii. 2. and his *filling the heart of Ananias to lie to the Holy Ghost*, Acts v. 3. it cannot after this, with any colour of reason, be doubted, but that the holy Spirit of God, whose power and influence to good is much greater than that of the wicked spirit to evil, does frequently inject into, and imprint upon the soul many blessed motions and impulses to duty, and many powerful avocations from sin. So that a man shall not only, as the prophet says, *hear a voice behind him*, but also a voice within him, telling him which way he ought to go.

For doubtless, there is something more in those expressions of *being led by the Spirit*, and *being taught by the Spirit*, and the like, than mere tropes and metaphors; and nothing less is or can be imported by them, than that God sometimes speaks to, and converses with, the hearts of men, immediately by himself; and happy those, who by thus hearing him speak in a *still voice*, shall prevent his speaking to them in thunder.

But you will here ask, perhaps, how we shall distinguish in such motions, which of them proceed immediately from the Spirit of God, and which from the conscience? In answer to which, I must confess, that I know no certain mark of discrimination to distinguish them by; save only in general, that such as proceed immediately from God, use to strike the mind suddenly, and very powerfully. But then

I add also, that as the knowledge of this, in point of speculation, is so nice and difficult, so, thanks be to God, in point of practice it is not necessary. But let a man universally observe and obey every good motion rising in his heart, knowing that every such motion proceeds from God, either mediately or immediately; and that whether God speaks immediately by himself to the conscience, or mediately by the conscience to the soul, the authority is the same in both, and the contempt of either is rebellion.

Now the thing which I drive at, under this head of discourse, is to shew, that as God is sometimes pleased to address himself in this manner to the hearts of men; so, if the heart will receive and answer such motions, by a ready and obsequious compliance with them, there is no doubt but they will both return more frequently, and still more and more powerfully, till at length they produce such a degree of light in the conscience, as shall give a man both a clear sight of his duty, and a certain judgment of his condition.

On the contrary, as all resistance whatsoever of the dictates of conscience, even in the way of natural efficiency, brings a kind of hardness and stupefaction upon it; so the resistance of these peculiar suggestions of the Spirit will cause in it also a judicial hardness, which is yet worse than the other. So that God shall withdraw from such an heart, and the Spirit being grieved shall depart, and these blessed motions shall cease, and affect and visit it no more. The consequence of which is very terrible, as rendering a man past feeling: and then the less he feels in this world, the more he shall be sure to feel in the next. But,

3. Because the light of natural conscience is in many things defective and dim, and the internal voice of God's Spirit not always distinguishable, above all, let a man attend to the mind of God, uttered in his revealed word. I say, his revealed word. By which I do not mean that mysterious, extraordinary (and of late so much studied) book called the Revelation, and which perhaps the more it is studied the less it is understood, as generally either finding a man cracked, or making him so: but I mean those other writings of the prophets and apostles, which exhibit to us a plain, sure, perfect, and intelligible rule; a rule that will neither fail nor distract such as make use of it. A rule to judge of the two former rules by: for nothing that contradicts the revealed word of God, is either the voice of right reason or of the Spirit of God: nor is it possible that it should be so, without God's contradicting himself.

And therefore we see what high elogies are given to the written word by the inspired penmen of both Testaments. *It giveth understanding to the simple,* says David, in Psalm cxix. 130. And that, you will say, is no such easy matter to do.

It is able to *make the man of God perfect,* says St. Paul, 2 Tim. iii. 17. *It is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit; and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart,* Heb. iv. 12. Now what a force and fulness, what a vigour and emphasis is there in all these expressions! Enough, one would think, to recommend and endear the scriptures, even to the Papists themselves. For if, as the text says, *they*

give understanding to the simple; I know none more concerned to read and study them than their popes.

Wherefore since the light and energy of the written word is so mighty, let a man bring and hold his conscience to this steady rule; the unalterable rectitude of which, will infallibly discover the rectitude or obliquity of whatsoever it is applied to. We shall find it a rule, both to instruct us what to do, and to assure us in what we have done. For though natural conscience ought to be listened to, yet it is revelation alone that is to be relied upon: as we may observe in the works of art, a judicious artist will indeed use his eye, but he will trust only to his rule.

There is not any one action whatsoever which a man ought to do or to forbear, but the scripture will give him a clear precept or prohibition for it.

So that if a man will commit such rules to his memory, and stock his mind with portions of scripture answerable to all the heads of duty and practice, his conscience can never be at a loss, either for a direction of his actions, or an answer to a temptation: it was the very course which our Saviour himself took, when the devil plied him with temptation upon temptation. Still he had a suitable scripture ready to repel and baffle them all, one after another: every pertinent text urged home, being a direct stab to a temptation.

Let a man therefore consider and recount with himself the several duties and virtues of a Christian. Such as temperance, meekness, charity, purity of heart, pardoning of enemies, patience. (I had almost said passive obedience too, but that such old-

fashioned Christianity seems as much out of date with some, as Christ's divinity and satisfaction.) I say, let a man consider these and the like virtues, together with the contrary sins and vices that do oppose them; and then, as out of a full armory or magazine, let him furnish his conscience with texts of scripture, particularly enjoining the one, and forbidding or threatening the other. And yet I do not say that he should stuff his mind like the margent of some authors, with chapter and verse heaped together, at all adventures; but only that he should fortify it with some few texts, which are home, and apposite to his case. And a conscience thus supplied will be like a man armed at all points; and always ready either to receive or to attack his enemy. Otherwise it is not a man's having arms in his house; no, nor yet his having courage and skill to use them; but it is his having them still about him, which must both secure him from being set upon, and defend him when he is.

Accordingly, men must know, that without taking the forementioned course, all that they do in this matter is but lost labour; and that they read the scriptures to as little purpose as some use to quote them; much reading being like much eating, wholly useless without digestion; and it is impossible for a man to digest his meat, without also retaining it.

Till men get what they read into their minds, and fix it in their memories, they keep their religion as they use to do their Bibles, only in their closet, or carry it in their pocket; and that, you may imagine, must improve and affect the soul, just as much as a man's having plenty of provision only in his stores, will nourish and support his body. When men forget

the word heard or read by them, the devil is said *to steal it out of their hearts,* Luke viii. 12. And for this cause we do with as much reason, as propriety of speech, call the committing of a thing to memory, the getting it by heart. For it is the memory that must transmit it to the heart; and it is in vain to expect, that the heart should keep its hold of any truth, when the memory has let it go.

4. The fourth and last way that I shall mention for the getting of the conscience rightly informed, and afterwards keeping it so, is frequently and impartially to account with it. It is with a man and his conscience, as with one man and another; amongst whom we use to say, that *even reckoning makes lasting friends;* and the way to make reckonings even, I am sure, is to make them often. Delays in accounts are always suspicious; and bad enough in themselves, but commonly much worse in their cause. For to defer an account, is the ready way to perplex it; and when it comes to be perplexed and intricate, no man, either as to his temporal or spiritual estate, can know of himself what he is, or what he has, or upon what bottom he stands. But the amazing difficulty and greatness of his account will rather terrify than inform him; and keep him from setting heartily about such a task as he despairs ever to go through with. For no man willingly begins what he has no hope to finish.

But let a man apply to this work by frequent returns and short intervals, while the heap is small, and the particulars few, and he will find it easy and conquerable; and his conscience, like a faithful steward, shall give him in a plain, open, and entire

account of himself, and hide nothing from him. Whereas we know, if a steward or cashier be suffered to run on from year to year without bringing him to a reckoning, it is odds but such a sottish forbearance will in time teach him to shuffle; and strongly tempt him to be a cheat, if not also to make him so: for as the account runs on, generally the accountant goes backward.

And for this cause some judge it advisable for a man to account with his heart every day; and this, no doubt, is the best and surest course; for still the oftener the better. And some prescribe accounting once a week; longer than which it is by no means safe to delay it: for a man shall find his heart deceitful, and his memory weak, and nature extremely averse from seeking narrowly after that which it is unwilling to find; and being found, will assuredly disturb it.

So that upon the whole matter it is infinitely absurd to think, that conscience can be kept in order without frequent examination. If a man would have his conscience deal clearly with him, he must deal severely with that. Often scouring and cleansing it will make it bright; and when it is so, he may see himself in it: and if he sees any thing amiss, let this satisfy him, that no man is or can be the worse for knowing the very worst of himself.

On the contrary, if conscience, by a long neglect of, and disacquaintance with itself, comes to contract an inveterate rust or soil, a man may as well expect to see his face in a mud-wall, as that such a conscience should give him a true report of his condition; no, it leaves him wholly in the dark, as to the greatest concern he has in both worlds. He can

neither tell whether God be his friend or his enemy, or rather he has shrewd cause to suspect him his enemy, and cannot possibly know him to be his friend. And this being his case, he must live in ignorance and die in ignorance; and it will be hard for a man to die in it, without dying for it too.

And now, what a wretched condition must that man needs be in, whose heart is in such a confusion, such darkness, and such a settled blindness, that it shall not be able to tell him so much as one true word of himself! Flatter him it may, I confess, (as those are generally good at flattering, who are good for nothing else,) but, in the mean time, the poor man is left under the fatal necessity of a remediless delusion: for in judging of a man's self, if conscience either cannot or will not inform him, there is a certain thing called *self-love* that will be sure to deceive him. And thus I have shewn, in four several particulars, what is to be done, both for the getting and keeping of the conscience so informed, as that it may be able to give us a rational confidence towards God. As,

1. That the voice of reason, in all the dictates of natural morality, ought carefully to be attended to by a strict observance of what it commands, but especially of what it forbids.

2. That every pious motion from the Spirit of God ought tenderly to be cherished, and by no means checked or quenched either by resistance or neglect.

3. That conscience is to be kept close to the rule of the written word.

4thly and lastly, That it is frequently to be examined, and severely accounted with.

And I doubt not but a conscience thus disciplined, shall give a man such a faithful account of himself, as shall never shame nor lurch the confidence which he shall take up from it.

Nevertheless, to prevent all mistakes in so critical a case, and so high a concern, I shall close up the foregoing particulars with this twofold caution.

First, Let no man think that every doubting or misgiving about the safety of his spiritual estate, overthrows the confidence hitherto spoken of. For, as I shewed before, the confidence mentioned in the text, is not properly assurance, but only a rational, well-grounded hope; and therefore may very well consist with some returns of doubting. For we know, in that pious and excellent confession and prayer, made by the poor man to our Saviour, in Mark ix. 24, how in the very same breath in which he says, *Lord, I believe;* he says also, *Lord, help my unbelief.* So that we see here, that the sincerity of our faith or confidence will not secure us against all vicissitudes of wavering or distrust; indeed no more than a strong athletic constitution of body will secure a man always against heats, and colds, and rheums, and such like indispositions.

And one great reason of this is, because such a faith or confidence as we have been treating of, resides in the soul or conscience as an habit. And habits, we know, are by no means either inconsistent with, or destroyed by, every contrary act. But especially in the case now before us, where the truth and strength of our confidence towards God does not consist so much in the present act, by which it exerts itself, no, nor yet in the habit producing this act, as it does in the ground or reason which this

confidence is built upon; which being the standing sincerity of a man's heart, though the present act be interrupted, (as, no doubt, through infirmity or temptation it may be very often,) yet, so long as that sincerity, upon which this confidence was first founded, does continue, as soon as the temptation is removed and gone, the forementioned faith, or affiance, will, by renewed, vigorous, and fresh acts, recover and exert itself, and with great comfort and satisfaction of mind give a man confidence towards God. Which, though it be indeed a lower and a lesser thing than assurance, yet, as to all the purposes of a pious life, may, for ought I see, prove much more useful; as both affording a man due comfort, and yet leaving room for due caution too; which are two of the principal uses that religion serves for in this world.

2. The other caution, with reference to the foregoing discourse, is this; Let no man, from what has been said, reckon a bare silence of conscience in not accusing or disturbing him, a sufficient argument for confidence towards God. For such a silence is so far from being always so, that it is usually worse than the fiercest and loudest accusations; since it may, and for the most part does, proceed from a kind of numbness or stupidity of conscience, and an absolute dominion obtained by sin over the soul; so that it shall not so much as dare to complain or make a stir. For, as our Saviour says, Luke xi. 21. *While the strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace.* So, while sin rules and governs with a strong hand, and has wholly subdued the conscience to a slavish subjection to its tyrannical yoke; the soul shall be at peace, such a false peace as it is; but for that very cause worse a great

deal, and more destructive, than when, by continual alarms and assaults, it gives a man neither peace nor truce, quiet nor intermission. And therefore it is very remarkable, that the text expresses the sound estate of the heart or the conscience here spoken of, not barely by its not accusing, but by its not condemning us, which word imports properly an acquitment or discharge of a man upon some precedent accusation, and a full trial and cognizance of his cause had thereupon. For as *condemnation*, being a law term, and so relating to the judicial proceedings of law courts, must still presuppose an hearing of the cause, before any sentence can pass; so likewise in the court of conscience, there must be a strict and impartial inquiry into all a man's actions, and a thorough hearing of all that can be pleaded for and against him, before conscience can rationally either condemn or discharge him: and if indeed upon such a fair and full trial he can come off, he is then *rectus in curia*, clear and innocent, and consequently may reap all that satisfaction from himself, which it is natural for innocence to afford the person who has it. I do not here speak of a legal innocence, (none but sots and Quakers dream of such things,) for, as St. Paul says, Galat. ii. 16. *by the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified:* but I speak of an evangelical innocence; such an one as the economy of the gospel accepts, whatsoever the law enjoins; and though mingled with several infirmities and defects, yet amounts to such a pitch of righteousness, as we call *sincerity*. And whosoever has this, shall never be damned for want of the other.

And now, how vastly does it concern all those who shall think it worth their while to be in earnest

with their immortal souls, not to abuse and delude themselves with a false confidence? a thing so easily taken up, and so hardly laid down. Let no man conclude, because his conscience says nothing to him, that therefore it has nothing to say. Possibly some never so much as doubted of the safety of their spiritual estate in all their lives; and if so, let them not flatter themselves, but rest assured that they have so much the more reason a great deal to doubt of it now. For the causes of such a profound stillness are generally gross ignorance, or long custom of sinning, or both; and these are very dreadful symptoms indeed to such as are not hell and damnation proof. When a man's wounds cease to smart, only because he has lost his feeling, they are nevertheless mortal for his not seeing his need of a chirurgeon. It is not mere, actual, present ease, but ease after pain, which brings the most durable and solid comfort. Acquitment before trial can be no security. Great and strong calms usually portend and go before the most violent storms. And therefore, since storms and calms (especially with reference to the state of the soul) do always follow one another; certainly of the two it is much more eligible to have the storm first and the calm afterwards: since a calm before a storm is commonly a peace of a man's own making; but a calm after a storm, a peace of God's.

To which God, who only can speak such peace to us, as neither the world nor the devil shall be able to take from us, be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

A further Account of the Nature and Measures of Conscience:

IN

A SERMON

ON 1 JOHN III. 21.

PREACHED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY,

AT CHRIST-CHURCH, OXON,

OCTOBER 30, 1692.

1 JOHN iii. 21.

Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, we have confidence toward God.

I HAVE discoursed once already upon these words in this place. In which discourse, after I had set down four several false grounds upon which men, in judging of the safety of their spiritual estate, were apt to found a wrong confidence towards God, and shewn the falsity of them all; and that there was nothing but a man's own heart or conscience, which, in this great concern, he could with any safety rely upon; I did, in the next place, cast the further prosecution of the words under these four following particulars.

1. To shew, How the heart or conscience ought to be informed, in order to its founding in us a rational confidence towards God.

2. To shew, How, and by what means, we may

get our conscience thus informed, and afterwards preserve and keep it so.

3. To shew, Whence it is, that the testimony of conscience, thus informed, comes to be so authentic, and so much to be relied upon. And,

4thly and lastly, To assign some particular cases or instances, in which the confidence suggested by it, does most eminently shew and exert itself.

Upon the first of which heads, to wit, How the heart or conscience ought to be informed, in order to its founding in us a rational confidence towards God, after I had premised something about an erroneous conscience, and shewn both what influence that ought to have upon us, and what regard we ought to have to that in this matter, I gathered the result of all into this one conclusion; namely, That such a conscience as has not been wanting to itself, in endeavouring the utmost knowledge of its duty, and the clearest information about the will of God, that its power, advantages, and opportunities could afford it, is that great internal judge, whose absolution is a rational and sure ground of confidence towards God. This I then insisted upon at large, and from thence proceeded to the

Second particular, which was to shew, How, and by what means, we might get our conscience thus informed, and afterwards preserve and keep it so.

Where, amongst those many ways and methods which might, no doubt, have been assigned as highly conducing to this purpose, I singled out and insisted upon only these four. As,

1st, That the voice of reason, in all the dictates of natural morality, was still carefully to be attended to

by a strict observance of what it commanded, but especially of what it forbad.

2dly, That every pious motion from the Spirit of God was tenderly to be cherished, and by no means quenched or checked, either by resistance or neglect.

3dly, That conscience was still to be kept close to the rule of God's written word; and,

4thly and lastly, That it was frequently to be examined, and severely accounted with.

These things also I then more fully enlarged upon; and so closed up all with a double caution, and that of no small importance as to the case then before us: as,

First, That no man should reckon every doubting or misgiving of his heart, about the safety of his spiritual estate, inconsistent with that confidence towards God which is here spoken of in the text: and secondly, That no man should account a bare silence of conscience in not accusing or disturbing him, a sufficient ground for such a confidence. Of both which I then shew the fatal consequence. And so, not to trouble you with any more repetitions than these, which were just and necessary to lay before you the coherence of one thing with another, I shall now proceed to the third of those four particulars first proposed; which was to shew, Whence it is that the testimony of conscience (concerning a man's spiritual estate) comes to be so authentic, and so much to be relied upon.

Now the force and credit of its testimony stands upon this double ground.

1st, The high office which it holds immediately from God himself, in the soul of man; and,

2dly, Those properties or qualities which peculiarly fit it for the discharge of this high office, in all things relating to the soul.

1. And first, for its office. It is no less than God's vicegerent or deputy, doing all things by immediate commission from him. It commands and dictates every thing in God's name, and stamps every word with an almighty authority. So that it is, as it were, a kind of copy or transcript of the divine sentence, and an interpreter of the sense of Heaven. And from hence it is, that sins against conscience (as all sins against light and conviction are, by way of eminence, so called) are of so peculiar and transcendent a guilt. For that every such sin is a daring and direct defiance of the divine authority, as it is signified and reported to a man by his conscience, and thereby ultimately terminates in God himself.

Nay, and this vicegerent of God has one prerogative above all God's other earthly vicegerents; to wit, that it can never be deposed. Such a strange, sacred, and inviolable majesty has God imprinted upon this faculty; not indeed as upon an absolute, independent sovereign, but yet with so great a communication of something next to sovereignty, that while it keeps within its proper compass, it is controllable by no mortal power upon earth. For not the greatest monarch in the world can countermand conscience so far, as to make it condemn where it would otherwise acquit, or acquit where it would otherwise condemn; no, neither sword nor sceptre can come at it; but it is above and beyond the reach of both.

And if it were not for this awful and majestic character which it bears, whence could it be, that the stoutest and bravest hearts droop and sneak

when conscience frowns: and the most abject and afflicted wretch feels an unspeakable, and even triumphant joy, when the judge within absolves and applauds him. When a man has done any villainous act, though under countenance of the highest place and power, and under covert of the closest secrecy, his conscience, for all that, strikes him like a clap of thunder, and depresses him to a perpetual trepidation, horror, and poorness of spirit; so that, like Nero, though surrounded with his Roman legions and Pretorian bands, he yet sculks, and hides himself, and is ready to fly *to* every thing for refuge, though he sees nothing to fly *from*. And all this, because he has heard a condemning sentence from within, which the secret forebodings of his mind tell him will be ratified by a sad and certain execution from above: on the other side, what makes a man so cheerful, so bright and confident in his comforts, but because he finds himself acquitted by God's high commissioner and deputy? Which is as much as a pardon under God's own hand, under the broad seal of Heaven, (as I may so express it.) For a king never condemns any whom his judges have absolved, nor absolves whom his judges have condemned, whatsoever the people and republicans may.

Now from this principle, that the authority of conscience stands founded upon its vicegerency and deputation under God, several very important inferences may, or rather indeed unavoidably must, ensue. Two of which I shall single out and speak of; as,

First, We collect from hence the absurdity and impertinence; and,

Secondly, The impudence and impiety of most of those pretences of conscience, which have borne such

a mighty sway all the world over, and in these poor nations especially.

1. And first, for the absurdity and impertinence of them. What a rattle and a noise has this word *conscience* made! How many battles has it fought! How many churches has it robbed, ruined, and *reformed* to ashes! How many laws has it trampled upon, dispensed with, and addressed against! And, in a word, how many governments has it overturned! Such is the mischievous force of a plausible word, applied to a detestable thing.

The allegation or plea of conscience ought never to be admitted barely for itself: for when a thing obliges only by a borrowed authority, it is ridiculous to allege it for its own. Take a lieutenant, a commissioner, or ambassador of any prince; and, so far as he represents his prince, all that he does or declares nuder that capacity has the same force and validity, as if actually done or declared by the prince himself in person. But then how far does this reach? Why, just so far as he keeps close to his instructions: but when he once balks them, though what he does may be indeed a public crime or a national mischief, yet it is but a private act; and the doer of it may chance to pay his head for the presumption. For still, as great as the authority of such kind of persons is, it is not founded upon their own will, nor upon their own judgment, but upon their commission.

In like manner, every dictate of this vicegerent of God, where it has a divine word or precept to back it, carries a divine authority with it. But if no such word can be produced, it may indeed be a strong opinion or persuasion, but it is not conscience: and

no one thing in the world has done more mischief, and caused more delusions amongst men, than their not distinguishing between conscience, and mere opinion or persuasion.

Conscience is a Latin word, (though with an English termination,) and, according to the very notation of it, imports *a double* or *joint knowledge;* to wit, one of a divine law or rule, and the other of a man's own action: and so is properly the application of a general law to a particular instance of practice. The law of God, for example, says, *Thou shalt not steal;* and the mind of man tells him, that the taking of such or such a thing from a person lawfully possessed of it is stealing. Whereupon the conscience, joining the knowledge of both these together, pronounces in the name of God, that such a particular action ought not to be done. And this is the true procedure of conscience, always supposing a law from God, before it pretends to lay any obligation upon man: for still I aver, that conscience neither is nor ought to be its own rule.

I question not, I confess, but mere opinion or persuasion may be every whit as strong, and have as forcible an influence upon a man's actions as conscience itself. But then, we know, strength or force is one thing, and authority quite another. As a rogue upon the highway may have as strong an arm, and take off a man's head as cleverly as the executioner. But then there is a vast disparity in the two actions, when one of them is *murder*, and the other *justice:* nay, and our Saviour himself told his disciples, *that men should both kill them, and think that in so doing they did God service.* So that here, we see, was a full opinion and persuasion, and a very zealous

one too, of the high meritoriousness of what they did; but still there was no law, no word or command of God to ground it upon, and consequently it was not conscience.

Now the notion of conscience thus stated, if firmly kept to, and thoroughly driven home, would effectually baffle and confound all those senseless, though clamorous pretences of the schismatical opposers of the constitutions of our church. In defence of which, I shall not speak so much as one syllable against the indulgence and toleration granted to these men. No, since they have it, let them, in God's name, enjoy it, and the government make the best of it. But since I cannot find that the law which tolerates them in their way of worship (and it does no more) does at all forbid us to defend ours, it were earnestly to be wished, that all hearty lovers of the church of England would assert its excellent constitution more vigorously now than ever: and especially in such congregations as this; in which there are so many young persons, upon the well or ill principling of whom, next under God, depends the happiness or misery of this church and state. For if such should be generally prevailed upon by hopes or fears, by base examples, by trimming and time-serving (which are but two words for the same thing) to abandon and betray the church of England, by nauseating her pious, prudent, and wholesome orders, (of which I have seen some scurvy instances,) we may rest assured, that this will certainly produce confusion, and that confusion will as certainly end in popery.

And therefore, since the Liturgy, rites, and ceremonies of our church have been, and still are so much cavilled and struck at, and all upon a plea of con-

science, it will concern us, as becomes men of sense, seriously to examine the force of this plea, which our adversaries are still setting up against us as the grand pillar and buttress of the *good old cause* of nonconformity. For come to any dissenting brother, and ask him, Why cannot you communicate with the church of England? "Oh," says he, "it is "against my conscience; my conscience will not suffer "me to pray by a set form, to kneel at the sacra- "ment, to hear divine service read by one in a sur- "plice, or to use the cross in baptism," or the like.

Very well; and is this the case then, that it is all pure conscience that keeps you from complying with the rule and order of the church in these matters? If so, then produce me some word or law of God forbidding these things. For conscience never commands or forbids any thing authentically, but there is some law of God which commands or forbids it first. Conscience (as might be easily shewn) being no distinct power or faculty from the mind of man, but the mind of man itself applying the general rule of God's law to particular cases and actions. This is truly and properly conscience. And therefore shew me such a law; and that, either as a necessary dictate of right reason, or a positive injunction in God's revealed word: (for these two are all the ways by which God speaks to men nowadays:) I say, shew me something from hence, which countermands or condemns all or any of the forementioned ceremonies of our church, and then I will yield the cause. But if no such reason, no such scripture can be brought to appear in their behalf against us, but that with screwed face and doleful whine they only ply you with senseless harangues of conscience against *carnal ordi-*

nances, the dead letter, and *human inventions* on the one hand, and loud outcries for a *further reformation* on the other; then rest you assured that they have a design upon your pocket, and that the word *conscience* is used only as an instrument to pick it; and more particularly as it calls it a *further reformation*, signifies no more, with reference to the church, than as if one man should come to another and say, "Sir, "I have already taken away your cloak, and do fully "intend, if I can, to take away your coat also." This is the true meaning of this word *further reformation;* and so long as you understand it in this sense, you cannot be imposed upon by it.

Well, but if these mighty men at chapter and verse can produce you no scripture to overthrow our church ceremonies, I will undertake to produce scripture enough to warrant them; even all those places which absolutely enjoin obedience and submission to lawful governors in all not unlawful things: particularly that in 1 Pet. ii. 13. and that in Heb. xiii. 17. (of which two places more again presently,) together with the other in 1 Cor. xiv. last verse, enjoining order and decency in God's worship, and in all things relating to it. And consequently, till these men can prove the forementioned things, ordered by our church, to be either intrinsically unlawful or undecent, I do here affirm by the authority of the foregoing scriptures, that the use of them, as they stand established amongst us, is necessary; and that all pretences or pleas of conscience to the contrary, are nothing but cant and cheat, flam and delusion. In a word, the ceremonies of the church of England are as necessary as the injunctions of an undoubtedly lawful authority, the practice of the primitive church,

and the general rules of decency, determined to particulars of the greatest decency, can make them necessary. And I would not for all the world be arraigned at the last and great day for disturbing the church, and disobeying government, and have no better plea for so doing, than what those of the separation were ever yet able to defend themselves by.

But some will here say perhaps, If this be all that you require of us, we both can and do bring you scripture against your church ceremonies; even that which condemns all *will worship*, Col. ii. 23. and such other like places. To which I answer, first, that the *will worship*, forbidden in that scripture, is so termed, not from the circumstance, but from the object of religious worship; and we readily own, that it is by no means in the church's power to appoint or choose, whom or what it will worship. But that does not infer, that it is not therefore in the church's power to appoint how and in what manner it will worship the true object of religious worship; provided that in so doing it observes such rules of decency as are proper and conducing to that purpose. So that this scripture is wholly irrelative to the case before us; and as impertinently applied to it, as any poor text in the Revelation was ever applied to the grave and profound whimsies of some modern interpreters. But secondly, to this objection about *will worship*, I answer yet further; that the forementioned ceremonies of the church of England are no worship, nor part of God's worship at all, nor were ever pretended so to be; and, if they are not so much as *worship*, I am sure they cannot be *will worship*. But we own them only for circumstances, modes, and solemn usages, by which

God's worship is orderly and decently performed: I say, we pretend them not to be parts of divine worship; but, for all that, to be such things as the divine worship, in some instance or other, cannot be without: for that which neither does nor can give vital heat, may yet be necessary to preserve it: and he who should strip himself of all that is no part of himself, would quickly find, or rather feel the inconvenience of such a practice; and have cause to wish for a body as void of sense as such an argument.

Now the consequence in both these cases is perfectly parallel: and if so, you may rest satisfied, that what is *nonsense* upon a principle of reason, will never be *sense* upon a principle of religion. But as touching the necessity of the aforesaid usages in the church of England, I shall lay down these four propositions.

1. That circumstantials in the worship of God (as well as in all other human actions) are so necessary to it, that it cannot possibly be performed without them.

2. That decency in the circumstantials of God's worship is absolutely necessary.

3. That the general rule and precept of decency is not capable of being reduced to practice, but as it is exemplified in, and determined to, particular instances. And,

4thly and lastly, That there is more of the general nature of decency in those particular usages and ceremonies which the church of England has pitched upon, than is or can be shewn in any other whatsoever.

These things I affirm; and when you have put them all together, let any one give me a solid and

sufficient reason for the giving up those few ceremonies of our church, if he can. All the reason that I could ever yet hear alleged by the chief factors for a general intromission of all sorts, sects, and persuasions into our communion is, that those who separate from us are stiff and obstinate, and will not submit to the rules and orders of our church, and that therefore they ought to be taken away. Which is a goodly reason indeed, and every way worthy of the wisdom and integrity of those who allege it. And to shew that it is so, let it be but transferred from the ecclesiastical to the civil government, from church to state; and let all laws be abrogated, which any great or sturdy multitude of men have no mind to submit to. That is, in other words, let laws be made to obey, and not to be obeyed; and, upon these terms, I doubt not but you will find that kingdom (or rather that commonwealth) finely governed in a short time.

And thus I have shewn the absurdity, folly, and impertinence of alleging the obligation of conscience, where there is no law or command of God mediate or immediate to found that obligation upon. And yet, as bad as this is, it were well if the bare absurdity of these pretences were the worst thing which we had to charge them with. But it is not so. For our second and next inference from the foregoing principle of the vicegerency of conscience under God, will shew us also the daring impudence and downright impiety of many of those fulsome pleas of conscience, which the world has been too often and too scandalously abused by. For a man to sin against his conscience, is doubtless a great wickedness. But to make God himself a party

in the sin, is a much greater. For this is to plead God's authority against God's very law; which doubles the sin, and adds blasphemy to rebellion. And yet such things we have seen done amongst us. An horrid, unnatural, civil war raised and carried on; the purest and most primitively reformed church in the world laid in the dust; and one of the best and most innocent princes that ever sat upon a throne, by a barbarous unheard of violence, hurried to his grave in a bloody sheet, and not so much as suffered to rest there to this day; and all this by men acting under the most solemn pretences of conscience, that hypocrisy perhaps ever yet presumed to outface the world with.

And are not the principles of those wretches still owned, and their persons sainted by a race of men of the same stamp, risen up in their stead, the sworn mortal enemies of our church? And yet, for whose sake some projectors amongst us have been turning every stone to transform, mangle, and degrade its noble constitution to the homely, mechanic model of those republican, imperfect churches abroad; which, instead of being any rule or pattern to us, ought in all reason to receive one from us. Nay, and so short sighted are some in their politics, as not to discern all this while, that it is not the service but the revenue of our church which is struck at; and not any passages of our Liturgy, but the property of our lands which these reformers would have altered.

For I am sure no other alteration will satisfy dissenting consciences; no, nor this neither very long, without an utter abolition of all that looks like order or government in the church. And this we

may be sure of, if we do but consider both the inveterate malice of the Romish party, which sets these silly, unthinking tools a-work, and withal that monstrous principle or maxim, which those who divide from us (at least most of them) roundly profess, avow, and govern their consciences by; namely, That in all matters that concern religion or the church, though a thing or action be never so indifferent or lawful in itself; yet if it be commanded or enjoined by the government, either civil or ecclesiastical, it becomes *ipso facto*, by being so commanded, utterly unlawful, and such as they can, by no means, with good conscience comply with.

Which one detestable tenet or proposition, carrying in it the very quintessence and vital spirit of all nonconformity, absolutely cashiers and cuts off all church government at one stroke; and is withal such an insolent, audacious defiance of Almighty God, under the mask of conscience, as perhaps none in former ages, who so much as wore the name of Christians, ever arrived to or made profession of.

For to resume the scriptures afore quoted by us; and particularly that in 1 Pet. ii. 13. *Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man*, says the Spirit of God, speaking by that apostle. But say these men, If the ordinance of man enjoins you the practice of any thing with reference to religion or the church, though never so lawful in itself, you cannot with a good conscience submit to the ordinance of man in that case: that is, in other words, God says, they must submit; and they say, they must not.

Again, in the forementioned Heb. xiii. 17. The apostle bids them (and in them all Christians whatsoever) *to obey those who have the rule over them;*

speaking there of church rulers; for he tells them, *that they were such as watched for their souls.* But, says the Separatist, If those who have the rule over you, should command you any thing about church affairs, you cannot, you ought not in conscience to obey them; forasmuch as, according to that grand principle of theirs, newly specified by us, every such command makes obedience to a thing otherwise lawful, to become unlawful; and consequently, upon the same principle, rulers must not, cannot be obeyed: unless we could imagine, that there may be such a thing as obedience on the one side, when there must be no such thing as a command on the other; which would make pleasant sense of it indeed, and fit for none but a dissenting reason, as well as conscience, to assert. For though these men have given the world too many terrible proofs of their own example, that there may be commands, and no obedience; yet, I believe, it will put their little logic hard to it, to prove, that there can be any obedience where there is no command. And therefore it unanswerably follows, that the abetters of the forementioned principles plead conscience in a direct and barefaced contradiction to God's express command.

And now, I beseech you, consider with yourselves; (for it is no slight matter that I am treating of;) I say, consider what you ought to judge of those insolent, unaccountable boasts of conscience, which, like so many fireballs or mouth-granadoes, as I may so term them, are every day thrown at our church. The apostle bids us *prove all things.* And will you then take conscience at every turn, upon its own word? upon the forlorn credit of every bold im-

postor who pleads it? Will you sell your reason, your church, and your religion, and both of them the best in the world, for a name? and that a wrested, abused, misapplied name? Knaves, when they design some more than ordinary villainy, never fail to make use of this plea; and it is because they always find fools ready to believe it.

But you will say then, What course must be taken to fence against this imposture? Why truly, the best that I know of, I have told you before; namely, that whensoever you hear any of these sly, sanctified sycophants, with turned up eye and shrug of shoulder, pleading conscience for or against any thing or practice, you would forthwith ask them, what word of God they have to bottom that judgment of their conscience upon? Forasmuch as conscience, being God's vicegerent, was never commissioned by him to govern us in its own name; but must still have some divine word or law to support and warrant it. And therefore call for such a word; and that, either from scripture or from manifest universal reason, and insist upon it, so as not to be put off without it. And if they can produce you no such thing from either of them, (as they never can,) then rest assured that they are errant cheats and hypocrites; and that, for all their big words, the conscience of such men is so far from being able to give them any true confidence towards God, that it cannot so much as give them confidence towards a wise and good man, no, nor yet towards themselves, who are far from being either.

And thus I have shewn you the first ground upon which the testimony of conscience (concerning a man's spiritual estate) comes to be so authentic, and so much

to be relied upon; to wit, the high office which it holds, as the vicegerent of God himself in the soul of man: together with the two grand inferences drawn from thence. The first of them shewing the absurdity, folly, and impertinence of pretending conscience against any thing, when there is no law of God mediate or immediate against it: and the other, setting forth the intolerable blasphemy and impiety of pretending conscience for any thing, which the known law of God is directly against, and stands in open defiance of.

Proceed we now to the second ground, from which conscience derives the credit of its testimony in judging of our spiritual estate; and that consists in those properties and qualities which so peculiarly fit it for the discharge of its forementioned office, in all things relating to the soul. And these are three.

First, The quickness of its sight.

Secondly, The tenderness of its sense; and,

Thirdly and lastly, Its rigorous and impartial way of giving sentence.

Of each of which in their order. And first for the extraordinary quickness and sagacity of its sight, in spying out every thing which can any way concern the estate of the soul. As the voice of it, I shew, was as loud as thunder; so the sight of it is as piercing and quick as lightning. It presently sees the guilt, and looks through all the flaws and blemishes of a sinful action; and on the other side, observes the candidness of a man's very principles, the sincerity of his intentions, and the whole carriage of every circumstance in a virtuous performance. So strict and accurate is this spiritual inquisition.

Upon which account it is, that there is no such

thing as perfect secrecy, to encourage a rational mind to the perpetration of any base action. For a man must first extinguish and put out the great light within him, his conscience, he must get away from himself, and shake off the thousand witnesses, which he always carries about him, before he can be alone. And where there is no solitude, I am sure there can be no secrecy.

It is confessed indeed, that a long and a bold course of sinning may (as we have shewn elsewhere) very much dim and darken the discerning faculty of conscience. For so the apostle assures us it did with those in Rom. i. 21. and the same, no doubt, it does every day; but still so, as to leave such persons, both then and now, many notable lucid intervals; sufficient to convince them of their deviations from reason and natural religion; and thereby to render them inexcusable; and so, in a word, to stop their mouths, though not save their souls. In short, their conscience was not stark dead, but under a kind of spiritual apoplexy or deliquium. The operation was hindered, but the faculty not destroyed. And now, if conscience be naturally thus apprehensive and sagacious; certainly this ought to be another great ground, over and above its bare authority, why we should trust and rely upon the reports of it. For knowledge is still the ground and reason of trust; and so much as any one has of discernment, so far he is secured from error and deception, and for that cause fit to be confided in. No witness so much to be credited as an eyewitness. And conscience is like the great eye of the world, the sun, always open, always making discoveries. Justly therefore may we by the light of it take a view of our condition.

2dly, Another property or quality of conscience, enabling it to judge so truly of our spiritual estate, is the tenderness of its sense. For as, by the quickness of its sight, it directs us what to do, or not to do; so, by this tenderness of its sense, it excuses or accuses us, as we have done or not done according to those directions. And it is altogether as nice, delicate, and tender in feeling, as it can be perspicacious and quick in seeing. For conscience, you know, is still called and accounted the eye of the soul: and how troublesome is the least mote or dust falling into the eye! and how quickly does it weep and water, upon the least grievance that afflicts it!

And no less exact is the sense which conscience, preserved in its native purity, has of the least sin. For as great sins waste, so small ones are enough to wound it; and every wound, you know, is painful, till it festers beyond recovery. As soon as ever sin gives the blow, conscience is the first thing that feels the smart. No sooner does the poisoned arrow enter, but that begins to bleed inwardly; sin and sorrow, the venom of one and the anguish of the other, being things inseparable.

Conscience, if truly tender, never complains without a cause; though, I confess, there is a new-fashioned sort of tenderness of conscience, which always does so: but that is like the tenderness of a bog or quagmire; and it is very dangerous coming near it, for fear of being swallowed up by it. For when conscience has once acquired this artificial tenderness, it will strangely enlarge or contract its swallow, as it pleases; so that sometimes a camel shall slide down with ease, where, at other times, even a gnat may chance to stick by the way. It is indeed

such a kind of tenderness, as makes the person who has it generally very tender of obeying the laws, but never so of breaking them. And therefore, since it is commonly at such variance with the law, I think the law is the fittest thing to deal with it.

In the mean time, let no man deceive himself, or think, that true tenderness of conscience is any thing else but an awful and exact sense of the rule which should direct, and of the law which should govern it. And while it steers by this compass, and is sensible of every declination from it, so long it is truly and properly tender, and fit to be relied upon, whether it checks or approves a man for what he does. For from hence alone springs its excusing or accusing power: all accusation, in the very nature of the thing, still supposing, and being founded upon, some law: for where there is no law, there can be no transgression: and where there can be no transgression, I am sure there ought to be no accusation.

And here, when I speak of law, I mean both the law of God, and of man too. For where the matter of a law is a thing not evil, every law of man is virtually, and at a second hand, the law of God also: forasmuch as it binds in the strength of the divine law, commanding obedience to *every ordinance of man*, as we have already shewn. And therefore all tenderness of conscience against such laws is hypocrisy, and patronized by none but men of design, who look upon it as the fittest engine to get into power by; which, by the way, when they are once possessed of, they generally manage with as little tenderness as they do with conscience: of which we have had but too much experience already, and it would be but ill venturing upon more.

In a word, conscience, not acting by and under a law, is a boundless, daring, and presumptuous thing: and for any one, by virtue thereof, to challenge to himself a privilege of doing what he will, and of being unaccountable for what he does, is in all reason too much either for man or angel to pretend to.

3dly, The third and last property of conscience which I shall mention, and which makes the verdict of it so authentic, is its great and rigorous impartiality. For as its wonderful apprehensiveness made that it could not easily be deceived, so this makes that it will by no means deceive. A judge, you know, may be skilful in understanding a cause, and yet partial in giving sentence. But it is much otherwise with conscience; no artifice can induce it to accuse the innocent, or to absolve the guilty. No; we may as well bribe the light and the day to represent white things black, or black white.

What pitiful things are power, rhetoric, or riches, when they would terrify, dissuade, or buy off conscience from pronouncing sentence according to the merit of a man's actions! For still, as we have shewn, conscience is a copy of the divine law; and though judges may be bribed or frightened, yet laws cannot. The law is impartial and inflexible; it has no passions or affections, and consequently never accepts persons, nor dispenses with itself.

For let the most potent sinner upon earth speak out, and tell us, whether he can command down the clamours and revilings of a guilty conscience, and impose silence upon that bold reprover. He may perhaps for a while put on an high and a big look; but can he, for all that, look conscience out of countenance? And he may also dissemble a little forced

jollity; that is, he may court his mistress, and quaff his cups, and perhaps sprinkle them now and then with a few *Dammees;* but who, in the mean time, besides his own wretched, miserable self, knows of those secret, bitter infusions which that terrible thing, called *conscience*, makes into all his draughts? Believe it, most of the appearing mirth in the world is not mirth, but art. The *wounded spirit* is not seen, but walks under a disguise; and still the less you see of it, the better it looks.

On the contrary, if we consider the virtuous person, let him declare freely, whether ever his conscience checked him for his innocence, or upbraided him for an action of duty; did it ever bestow any of its hidden lashes or concealed bites on a mind severely pure, chaste, and religious?

But when conscience shall complain, cry out, and recoil, let a man descend into himself with too just a suspicion that all is not right within. For surely that hue and cry was not raised upon him for nothing. The spoils of a rifled innocence are borne away, and the man has stolen something from his own soul, for which he ought to be pursued, and will at last certainly be overtook.

Let every one therefore attend the sentence of his conscience: for he may be sure it will not daub nor flatter. It is as severe as law, as impartial as truth. It will neither conceal nor pervert what it knows.

And thus I have done with the third of those four particulars at first proposed, and shewn whence, and upon what account it is, that the testimony of conscience, concerning our spiritual estate, comes to be so authentic, and so much to be relied upon:

namely, for that it is fully empowered and commissioned to this great office by God himself; and withal, that it is extremely quicksighted to apprehend and discern; and moreover very tender and sensible of every thing that concerns the soul. And lastly, that it is most exactly and severely impartial in judging of whatsoever comes before it. Every one of which qualifications justly contributes to the credit and authority of the sentence which shall be passed by it. And so we are at length arrived at the fourth and last thing proposed from the words; which was to assign some particular cases or instances, in which this confidence towards God, suggested by a rightly informed conscience, does most eminently shew and exert itself.

I shall mention three.

1. In our addresses to God by prayer. When a man shall presume to come and place himself in the presence of the great searcher of hearts, and to ask something of him, while his conscience is all the while smiting him on the face, and telling him what a rebel and a traitor he is to the majesty which he supplicates; surely such an one should think with himself, that the God whom he prays to is greater than his conscience, and pierces into all the filth and baseness of his heart with a much clearer and more severe inspection. And if so, will he not likewise resent the provocation more deeply, and revenge it upon him more terribly, if repentance does not divert the blow? Every such prayer is big with impiety and contradiction, and makes as odious a noise in the ears of God, as the harangues of one of those rebel fasts, or humiliations in the year forty-one; invoking the blessings of Heaven upon such

actions and designs as nothing but hell could reward.

One of the most peculiar qualifications of an heart rightly disposed for prayer is, a well grounded confidence of a man's fitness for that duty. In Heb. x. 22. *Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith,* says the apostle. But whence must this assurance spring? Why, we are told in the very next words of the same verse: *having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience:* otherwise the voice of an impure conscience will cry much louder than our prayers, and speak more effectually against us than these can intercede for us.

And now, if prayer be the great conduit of mercy, by which the blessings of heaven are derived upon the creature, and the noble instrument of converse between God and the soul, then surely that which renders it ineffectual and loathsome to God, must needs be of the most mischievous and destructive consequence to mankind imaginable; and consequently to be removed with all that earnestness and concern, with which a man would rid himself of a plague or a mortal infection. For it taints and pollutes every prayer; it turns an oblation into an affront; and the odours of a sacrifice into the exhalations of a carcass. And, in a word, makes the heavens over us brass, denying all passage, either to descending mercies or ascending petitions.

But on the other side, when a man's breast is clear, and the same heart which indites does also encourage his prayer, when his innocence pushes on the attempt, and vouches the success; such an one goes boldly to the throne of grace, and his boldness is not greater than his welcome. God recognises

the voice of his own Spirit interceding within him; and his prayers are not only followed, but even prevented with an answer.

2dly, A second instance, in which this confidence towards God does so remarkably shew itself, is at the time of some notable trial or sharp affliction. When a man's friends shall desert him, his relations disown him, and all dependencies fail him, and, in a word, the whole world frown upon him; certainly it will then be of some moment to have a friend in the court of conscience, which shall, as it were, buoy up his sinking spirits, and speak greater things for him than all these together can declaim against him.

For as it is most certain, that no height of honour, nor affluence of fortune, can keep a man from being miserable, nor indeed contemptible, when an enraged conscience shall fly at him, and take him by the throat; so it is also as certain, that no temporal adversities can cut off those inward, secret, invincible supplies of comfort, which conscience shall pour in upon distressed innocence, in spite and in defiance of all worldly calamities.

Naturalists observe, that when the frost seizes upon wine, they are only the slighter and more waterish parts of it that are subject to be congealed; but still there is a mighty spirit, which can retreat into itself, and there within its own compass lie secure from the freezing impression of the element round about it. And just so it is with the spirit of a man, while a good conscience makes it firm and impenetrable. An outward affliction can no more benumb or quell it, than a blast of wind can freeze up the blood in a man's veins, or a little shower of

rain soak into his heart, and there quench the principle of life itself.

Take the two greatest instances of misery, which, I think, are incident to human nature; to wit, poverty and shame, and I dare oppose conscience to them both.

And first for poverty. Suppose a man stripped of all, driven out of house and home, and perhaps out of his country too, (which having, within our memory, happened to so many, may too easily, God knows, be supposed again,) yet if his conscience shall tell him, that it was not for any failure in his own duty, but from the success of another's villainy, that all this befell him; why then, his banishment becomes his preferment, his rags his trophies, his nakedness his ornament; and so long as his innocence is his repast, he feasts and banquets upon bread and water. He has disarmed his afflictions, unstung his miseries; and though he has not the proper happiness of the world, yet he has the greatest that is to be enjoyed in it.

And for this, we might appeal to the experience of those great and good men, who, in the late times of rebellion and confusion, were forced into foreign countries, for their unshaken firmness and fidelity to the oppressed cause of majesty and religion, whether their conscience did not, like a *fidus Achates*, still bear them company, stick close to them, and suggest comfort, even when the causes of comfort were invisible; and, in a word, verify that great saying of the apostle in their mouths; *We have nothing, and yet we possess all things.*

For it is not barely a man's abridgment in his external accommodations which makes him miserable;

but when his conscience shall hit him in the teeth, and tell him, that it was his sin and his folly which brought him under these abridgments. That his present scanty meals are but the natural effects of his former over-full ones. That it was his tailor, and his cook, his fine fashions, and his French ragouts, which sequestered him; and, in a word, that he came by his poverty as sinfully as some usually do by their riches; and consequently, that Providence treats him with all these severities, not by way of trial, but by way of punishment and revenge. The mind surely, of itself, can feel none of the burnings of a fever; but if my fever be occasioned by a surfeit, and that surfeit caused by my sin, it is that which adds fuel to the fiery disease, and rage to the distemper.

2dly, Let us consider also the case of calumny and disgrace; doubtless, the sting of every reproachful speech is the truth of it; and to be conscious, is that which gives an edge and keenness to the invective. Otherwise, when conscience shall plead not guilty to the charge, a man entertains it not as an indictment, but as a libel. He hears all such calumnies with a generous unconcernment; and receiving them at one ear, gives them a free and easy passage through the other: they fall upon him like rain or hail upon an oiled garment; they may make a noise indeed, but can find no entrance. The very whispers of an acquitting conscience will drown the voice of the loudest slander.

What a long charge of hypocrisy, and many other base things, did Job's friends draw up against him! but he regarded it no more than the dunghill which

he sat upon, while his conscience enabled him to appeal even to God himself; and, in spite of calumny, to assert and hold fast his integrity.

And did not Joseph lie under as black an infamy, as the charge of the highest ingratitude and the lewdest villainy could fasten upon him? Yet his conscience raised him so much above it, that he scorned so much as to clear himself, or to recriminate the strumpet by a true narrative of the matter. For we read nothing of that in the whole story: such confidence, such greatness of spirit, does a clear conscience give a man; always making him more solicitous to preserve his innocence, than concerned to prove it. And so we come now to the

Third, and last instance, in which, above all others, this confidence towards God does most eminently shew and exert itself; and that is at the time of death. Which surely gives the grand opportunity of trying both the strength and worth of every principle. When a man shall be just about to quit the stage of this world, to put off his mortality, and to deliver up his last accounts to God; at which sad time, his memory shall serve him for little else, but to terrify him with a sprightful review of his past life, and his former extravagances stripped of all their pleasure, but retaining their guilt. What is it then, that can promise him a fair passage into the other world, or a comfortable appearance before his dreadful Judge, when he is there? Not all the friends and interests, all the riches and honours under heaven, can speak so much as a word for him, or one word of comfort to him in that condition;

they may possibly reproach, but they cannot relieve him.

No, at this disconsolate time, when the busy tempter shall be more than usually apt to vex and trouble him, and the pains of a dying body to hinder and discompose him, and the settlement of worldly affairs to disturb and confound him; and, in a word, all things conspire to make his sick bed grievous and uneasy: nothing can then stand up against all these ruins, and speak life in the midst of death, but a clear conscience.

And the testimony of that shall make the comforts of heaven descend upon his weary head, like a refreshing dew or shower upon a parched ground. It shall give him some lively earnests and secret anticipations of his approaching joy. It shall bid his soul go out of the body undauntedly, and lift up its head with confidence before saints and angels. Surely the comfort, which it conveys at this season, is something bigger than the capacities of mortality; mighty and unspeakable, and not to be understood, till it comes to be felt.

And now, who would not quit all the pleasures, and trash, and trifles, which are apt to captivate the heart of man, and pursue the greatest rigours of piety and austerities of a good life, to purchase to himself such a conscience, as, at the hour of death, when all the friendships of the world shall bid him adieu, and the whole creation turn its back upon him, shall dismiss his soul, and close his eyes with that blessed sentence, *Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!*

For he, whose conscience enables him to look

God in the face with confidence here, shall be sure to see his face also with comfort hereafter.

Which God of his mercy grant to us all; to whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

TO

THE MOST REVEREND FATHER IN GOD

NARCISSUS,

LORD ARCHBISHOP OF DUBLIN, HIS GRACE[a].

My Lord,

THE particular acquaintance and friendship which your Grace was pleased to honour me with while you lived at Oxford, have emboldened me to address myself to your Lordship at this great distance of place, and greater of condition; in hopes that by your Grace's advancement to so high a station in the church, that, which before was only friendship, may now improve into patronage and protection. And yet, as ambitious as I am of so ennobling a patronage, and as singular a value as I have for your Grace's favour, I must needs own, that the design of my present application to your Grace, is not so much to crave a favour, as to pay a debt; and, in answer to the many obligations I lie under, to congratulate your Grace on that height of dignity and greatness to which Providence has so happily raised you, and your own worth so justly entitled you; and so, without your seeking (and much less sneaking) for it, made you, to your great honour, to be sought for by it: there being (as from my heart I believe) few examples in the world of so much merit and so much modesty in conjunction.

It is indeed no small infelicity to the church of England, to have parted with so extraordinary a member; but none at all, I conceive, to your Grace, that you are placed where

[a] This dedication refers to the twelve sermons next following.

you are; especially, if your Grace shall consider the present estate of our church here, as through the arts of her enemies she stands divided against herself: and that only by two or three odd new terms of distinction maliciously invented, and studiously made use of for that base purpose; such a sovereign, or at least such a peculiar method, have some found out for preserving our church, if the best way to preserve a body be by cutting it asunder. For those of the ancienter members of her communion, who have all along owned and contended for a strict conformity to her rules and sanctions, as the surest course to establish her, have been of late represented, or rather reprobated, under the inodiating character of high churchmen, and thereby stand marked out for all the discouragement that spite and power together can pass upon them; while those of the contrary way and principle are distinguished, or rather sanctified, by the fashionable endearing name of low churchmen, not from their affecting, we may be sure, a lower condition in the church than others, (since none lie so low but they can look as high,) but from the low condition which the authors of this distinction would fain bring the church itself into, a work in which they have made no small progress already. And thus by these ungenerous, as well as unconscionable practices, a fatal rent and division is made amongst us: and, being so, I think those of the concision who made it, would do well to consider, whether that, which our Saviour assures us will destroy a kingdom, be the likeliest way to settle and support a church. But I question not but these dividers will very shortly receive thanks from the Papists for the good services they have done them; and in the mean time they may be sure of their scoffs.

Never certainly were the fundamental articles of our faith so boldly impugned, nor the honour of our church so foully blemished, as they have been of late years; while the Socinians have had their full uncontrolled fling at both; and the Tritheists have injured and exposed them more by pretending to defend them against the Socinians, than the Socinians themselves did or could do by opposing them. For surely

it would be thought a very odd way of ridding a man of the plague by running him through with a sword; or of curing him of a lethargy by casting him into a calenture; a disease of a contrary nature indeed, but no less fatal to the patient; who equally dies, whether his sickness or his physic, the malignity of his distemper or the method of his cure, despatches him. And in like manner must it fare with a church, which, feeling itself struck with the poison of Socinianism, flies to Tritheism for an antidote.

But at length happily steps in the royal authority to the church's relief, with several healing injunctions in its hands, for the composing and ending the disputes about the Trinity then on foot; and those indeed so wisely framed, so seasonably timed, and (by the king, at least,) so graciously intended, that they must, in all likelihood, (without any other *Irenicon*,) have restored peace to the church, had it not been for the importunity and partiality of some, who having by the awe of these injunctions endeavoured to silence the opposite party, (which by their arguments they could not do,) and withal looking upon themselves as privileged persons, and so above those ordinances which others were to be subject to, resolved not to be silent themselves; but renewing the contest, partly by throwing Muggleton and Rigaltius, with some other foul stuff, in their adversaries' faces; and partly by a shameless reprinting (without the least reinforcing) the same exploded tritheistic notions again and again, they quite broke through the royal prohibitions, and soon after began to take as great a liberty in venting their innovations and invectives, as ever they had done before; so that he, who shall impartially consider the course taken by these men with reference to those engaged on the other side of this controversy about the Trinity, will find that their whole proceeding in it resembles nothing so much, as a thief's binding the hands of an honest man with a cord, much fitter for his own neck.

But, blessed be God, matters stand not so with you in Ireland; the climate there being not more impatient of poi-

sonous animals, than the church of poisonous opinions: an universal concurrent orthodoxy shining all over it, from the superior clergy who preside, to the inferior placed under them: so that we never hear from thence of any presbyter, and much less of any dean, who dares innovate upon the faith received: and least of all (should such a wretch chance to start up among you) can I hear of any bishop likely to debase his style and character so low, as either to defend the man, or colour over his opinions. Nor, lastly, do we find that in the judgment of the clergy there, a man's having wrote against one sort of heresy or heterodoxy, ought to justify or excuse him in writing for another, and much less for a worse.

The truth is, such things as these make the case with us here in England come too near that of Poland about a hundred and twenty or a hundred and thirty years ago[a], where the doctrine of three distinct infinite spirits began and led the dance, and was quickly followed (as the design was laid) by Socinianism, whereupon their old popery got a firmer establishment and more rigorous imposition than before, (the government preferring a less pure and perfect Christianity before the most refined Turcism.) This was the method taken there, and I wish it may not have the like issue here.

But on the contrary, amongst you, when a certain Mahometan Christian, (no new thing of late,) notorious for his blasphemous denial of the mysteries of our religion, and his insufferable virulence against the whole Christian priesthood, thought to have found shelter amongst you, the parliament, to their immortal honour, presently sent him packing, and without the help of a fagot soon made the kingdom too hot for him: a sufficient argument, doubtless, how far we are from needing those savage executions used by the Papists to rid the church of heretics and blasphemers,

[b] See a learned tract in 8vo. entitled, The Growth of Error, &c. sect. 8. printed in the year 1697.

where authority, animated with due zeal, will attempt that worthy work, by other more humane, but not less effectual means. Nothing certainly but power, as the world now goes, can keep the church in peace.

And now, my Lord, may that God by whom princes and prelates govern, and churches stand, long preserve your Grace, and that excellent church which you are so eminent a pillar of, and ornament to; and which, by her incomparable courage and faithfulness lately shewn in preserving that great *depositum*, the holy religion committed to her trust, has gotten herself a name which will never die; and such a solid well-founded reputation, as no bending this way or that way, no trimming or tricking it, ever could or can give so ample and so considerable a body: for it is lead only that bends to almost every thing, which the nobler metals cannot do, and the nobler sort of minds will not.

But I fear I trespass too far upon your Grace's time and business; and therefore humbly imploring your Grace's blessing, I lay these poor papers at your feet, infinitely unworthy, I confess, of the acceptance of so great a person, and the perusal of so judicious an eye; but yet at present the best pledges I can give your Grace of those sincere respects and services, which your Grace ought always to claim, and shall never fail to receive from,

My Lord,
Your Grace's ever faithful
and most obedient servant,
ROBERT SOUTH.

Westminster,
April 30, 1698.

The Doctrine of Merit stated, and the Impossibility of Man's meriting of God asserted, in

A DISCOURSE

ON JOB XXII. 2.

PREACHED AT WESTMINSTER-ABBEY,

DECEMBER 5, 1697.

JOB xxii. 2.

Can a man be profitable to God?

IT is a matter of no small moment certainly for a man to be rightly informed upon what terms and conditions he is to transact with God, and God with him, in the great business of his salvation. For by knowing upon what terms he must obtain eternal happiness hereafter, he will know also upon what grounds he is to hope for and expect it here; and so be able to govern both his actions and expectations according to the nature of the thing he is in pursuit of; lest otherwise he should chance to fail of the prize he runs for, by mistaking the way he should run in.

St. Paul, as plainly as words can express a thing, tells us, that *eternal life is the gift of God;* and consequently to be expected by us only as such: nay, he asserts it to be *a gift* in the very same verse in

which he affirms death to be as due to a sinner, as wages are to a workman, Romans vi. 23. Than which words nothing certainly can be more full and conclusive, that salvation proceeds wholly upon free-gift, though damnation upon strict desert.

Nevertheless, such is the extreme folly, or rather sottishness of man's corrupt nature, that this does by no means satisfy him. For though indeed he would fain be happy, yet fain would he also thank none for it but himself. And though he finds, that not only his duty, but his necessity brings him every day upon his knees to Almighty God for the very bread he eats; yet when he comes to deal with him about spirituals, (things of infinitely greater value,) he appears and acts, not as a suppliant, but as a merchant; not as one who comes to be relieved, but to traffick. For something he would receive of God, and something he would give him; and nothing will content this insolent, yet impotent creature, unless he may seem to buy the very thing he begs. Such being the pride and baseness of some spirits, that where they receive a benefit too big for them to requite, they will even deny the kindness, and disown the obligation.

Now this great self-delusion, so prevalent upon most minds, is the thing here encountered in the text. The words of which (by an usual way of speech) under an interrogation couching a positive assertion, are a declaration of the impossibility of man's being *profitable to God*, or (which is all one) of his meriting of God; according to the true, proper, and strict sense of merit. Nor does this interrogative way of expression import only a bare negation of the thing, as in itself impossible, but also

a manifest, undeniable evidence of the said impossibility; as if it had been said, that nothing can be more plainly impossible, than for a man to *be profitable to God;* for God to receive any advantage by man's righteousness; or to gain any thing by his making his ways perfect: and consequently, that nothing can be more absurd, and contrary to all sense and reason, than for a man to entertain and cherish so irrational a conceit, or to affirm so gross a paradox.

And that no other thing is here meant by a man's being *profitable to God,* but his meriting of God, will appear from a true state and account of the nature of merit; which we may not improperly define, a right to receive some good upon the score of some good done, together with an equivalence or parity of worth between the good to be received and the good done. So that although according to the common division of justice into *commutative* and *distributive,* that which is called *commutative* be employed only about the strict value of things, according to an arithmetical proportion, (as the schools speak,) which admits of no degrees; and the other species of justice, called *distributive,* (as consisting in the distribution of rewards and punishments,) admits of some latitude and degrees in the dispensation of it; yet, in truth, even this distribution itself must so far follow the rules of commutation, that the good to be dispensed by way of reward, ought in justice to be equivalent to the work or action which it is designed as a compensation of; so as by no means to sink below it, or fall short of the full value of it. From all which (upon a just estimate of the matter) it follows,

that, in true philosophy, merit is nothing else but an instance or exemplification of that noted saying or maxim, that one benefaction or good turn requires another; and imports neither more nor less than a man's claim or title to receive as much good from another as he had done for him.

Thus much therefore being premised, as an explication of the drift or design of the words, (the words themselves being too plain and easy to need any further exposition,) we shall observe and draw from them these four particulars.

First, Something supposed or implied in them, *viz.* That men are naturally very prone to entertain an opinion or persuasion, that they are able to merit of God, or be *profitable to him.*

Secondly, Something expressed, namely, That such an opinion or persuasion is utterly false and absurd; and that it is impossible for man to merit of God, or to be *profitable to him.*

Thirdly, Something inferred from both the former, to wit, That the forementioned opinion or persuasion is the very source or foundation of two of the greatest corruptions that have infested the Christian church and religion. And,

Fourthly and lastly, Something objected against the particulars discoursed of, which I shall endeavour to answer and remove; and so conclude this discourse.

Of each of which in their order: and,

First, for the first of them. The thing supposed or implied in the words, namely, That men are naturally very prone to entertain an opinion or persuasion, that they are able to merit of God, or be *profitable to him.*

The truth of which will appear from these two considerations.

First, That it is natural for them to place too high a value both upon themselves and their own performances. And that this is so, is evident from that universal experience, which proves it no less natural to them to bear a more than ordinary love to themselves; and all love, we know, is founded in, and results from, a proportionable esteem of the object loved: so that, look in what degree any man loves himself, in the same degree it will follow, that he must esteem himself too. Upon which account it is, that every man will be sure to set his own price upon what he is, and what he does, whether the world will come up to it or no; as it seldom does.

That speech of St. Peter to our Saviour is very remarkable, in Matt. xix. 27. *Master*, says he, *we have forsook all, and followed thee*; *what shall we have therefore?* In which words he seems to be upon equal terms with his Lord, and to expect no more of him, as he thought, but what he strictly had deserved from him; and all this from a conceit that he had done an act so exceedingly meritorious, that it must even nonplus his Master's bounty to quit scores with him by a just requital. Nay, so far had the same proud ferment got into the minds of all the disciples, that neither could their own low condition, nor the constant sermons of that great example of self-denial and humility, whom they daily conversed with, nor, lastly, the correctives of a peculiar grace, totally clear and cure them of it. And therefore no wonder if a principle so deeply rooted in nature works with the whole power of nature; and, considering also the corruption of nature, as little

wonder is it, if it runs out with an extravagance equal to its power, making the minds of men even drunk with a false intoxicating conceit of their own worth and abilities. From whence it is, that as man is, of all creatures in the world, both the most desirous and the most unable to advance himself; so, through pride and indigence, (qualities which usually concur in beggars,) none is so unwilling to own the benefactions he lives by, and has no claim to, as this weak and worthless self-admirer, who has nothing to be admired in him, but that he can, upon such terms, admire himself. For, *Naked came I into the world, and naked shall I go out again*, ought to be the motto of every man when born, the history of his life, and his epitaph when dead: his emptiness and self-consciousness together, cannot but make him feel in himself (which is the surest way of knowing) that he has indeed nothing, and yet he bears himself as if he could command all things; at the same time low in condition, and yet lofty in opinion; boasting and yet depending; nay, boasting against Him, whom he depends upon. Which certainly is the foulest solecism in behaviour, and two of the worst qualities that can be in conjunction. But,

Secondly, A second consideration, from whence we infer this proneness in men to think themselves able to merit of God, or to be *profitable to him*, is their natural aptness to form and measure their apprehensions of the supreme Lord of all things, by what they apprehend and observe of the princes and potentates of this world, with reference to such as are under their dominion. And this is certainly a very prevailing fallacy, and steals too easily upon men's minds, as being founded in the unhappy predomi-

nance of sense over reason; which, in the present condition of man's nature, does but too frequently and fatally take place. For men naturally have but faint notions of things spiritual, and such as incur not into their senses; but their eyes, their ears, and their hands are too often made by them the rule of their faith, but almost always the reason of their practice. And therefore no marvel, if they blunder in their notions about God; a being so vastly above the apprehensions of sense; while they conceive no otherwise of him at best, but as some great king or prince, ruling with a worldly majesty and grandeur over such puny mortals as themselves: whereupon, as they frame to themselves no other idea of him, but such as they borrow from the royal estate of an earthly sovereign, so they conceive also of their own relation to him, and dependance upon him, just as they do of that which passes between such a sovereign and his subjects; and consequently, since they find that there is no prince upon earth so absolute, but that he stands in as much need of his subjects for many things, as they do or can stand in need of him for his government and protection; (by reason whereof there must needs follow a reciprocal exchange of offices, and a mutual supply of wants between them, rendering both parties equally necessary to one another:) I say, from these misapplied premises, the low, gross, undistinguishing reason of the generality of mankind presently infers, that the creature also may, on some accounts, be as beneficial to his Creator, as such a subject is to his prince; and that there may be the like circulation of good turns between them; they being, as they think, within their compass, as really useful to God, as God

for his part is beneficial to them; which is the true notion of merit, or of being *profitable to God.* A conceit that sticks so close to human nature, that neither philosophy nor religion can wholly remove it: and yet if we consider the limited right which the greatest prince upon earth has over his meanest slave, and that absolute, boundless, paramount right, which God has over the very same things and persons, which such princes avow a claim to, and by virtue of which transcendent right something is God's which can never be theirs; and even what is theirs is still by a much higher title his: I say, if we consider this, the absurdity and inconsequence of all such discourses about the relation between God and man, as are taken from what we see and observe between man and man, as governing and governed, is hereby more than sufficiently proved; and yet as absurd, as fallacious, and inconsequent as this way of discoursing is, it is one of the chief foundations of the doctrine of merit, and consequently of the religion of too great a part of the world: a religion tending only to defraud men of their true Saviour, by persuading them that they may be their own. And thus much for the first particular, the thing supposed in the words, to wit, That men are naturally very prone to persuade themselves, that they are able to merit of God, or be *profitable to him.*

I proceed now to the

Second particular, in which we have something expressed, namely, That such a persuasion is utterly false and absurd, and that it is impossible for men to merit of God, or be *profitable to him.* And this I shall evince by shewing the several ingredients of *merit*, and the conditions necessary to render an ac-

tion meritorious. Such as are these four that follow; as,

First, That an action be not due; that is to say, it must not be such as a man stands obliged to the doing of, but such as he is free either to do, or not to do, without being chargeable with the guilt of any sinful omission in case he does it not. It being no ill account given of merit by Spanhemius [b], the elder, that it is *opus bonum indebitum faciens præmium, debitum ex indebito.* For otherwise, if that which is due may also merit, then, by paying what I owe, I may make my creditors my debtors; and every payment would not only clear, but also transfer the debt.

Besides, that in all the benefactions passing from Almighty God upon such as serve him the best they can, there could be no such thing as liberality; which can never take place but where something is given, which the receiver cannot challenge: nay, very hardly could there be any such thing as gift. For if there be first a claim, then, in strictness of speech, it is not so properly gift as payment. Yea, so vast would be the comprehension of justice, that it would scarce leave any object for favour. But God's grace and bounty being so prevented by merit, would be spectators rather than actors in the whole work of man's salvation. Nor would our obedience to God's positive precepts only, but also to his negative, sometimes strike in for their share of merit and claim to a reward. And any one who could plead such a negative righteousness, might come and demand a recompence of God for not drinking or whoring, swearing or blaspheming; just as the Pharisee did, for not being as the very dregs of sin-

[b] Dub. Evang. parte iii. pag. 782.

ners; and so vouch himself meritorious, forsooth, for being a degree or two short of scandalous. Moreover, amongst men, it would pass for an obligation between neighbours, that one of them did not rob or murder the other; and a sufficient plea for preferment before kings and governors, not to have deserved the gibbet and the halter; which is a poor plea indeed, when to have deserved them proves oftentimes a better. In short, upon these terms, he, who is not the very worst of villains, must commence presently a person of a peculiar worth; and bare indemnity will be too low a privilege for the merit of not being a clamorous, overgrown malefactor.

But now, that all that any man alive is capable of doing, is but an indispensable homage to God, and not a free oblation; and that also such an homage, as makes his obligation to what he does much earlier than his doing of it, will appear both from the law of nature, and that of God's positive command: of each of which a word or two, and

First, for the law of nature. There is nothing that nature proclaims with a louder and more intelligible voice, than that he who gives a being, and afterwards preserves and supports it, has an indefeasible claim to whatsoever the said being, so given and supported by him, either is, or has, or can possibly do. But this is a point which I must be more particular upon, and thereby lay a foundation for what I shall argue, *a fortiori*, concerning God himself, from what is to be observed amongst men. Now the right which one man has to the actions of another, is generally derived from one or both of these two great originals, production or possession. The first of which gives a parent right over the ac-

tions of his child; and the other gives a master a title to whatsoever can be done by his servant: which two are certainly the principal and most undoubted rights that take place in the world. And both of them are eminently and transcendently in God, as he stands related to men: and,

First, for production. By the purest and most entire communication of being, God did not only produce, but create man. He gave him an existence out of nothing, and while he was yet but a mere idea or possibility in the mind of his eternal Maker. That one expression of the Psalmist, *It is he who hath made us, and not we ourselves*, being both a full account, and an irrefragable demonstration of his absolute sovereignty over our persons, and incontestable claim to all our services: nor is this the utmost measure of our obligation to him, but as he first drew us out of nothing and non-existence, so he ever since keeps us from relapsing into it; his power brought us forth, and his providence maintains us. And thus has this poor impotent creature been perpetually hanging upon the bounty of his great Creator, and by a daily preservation of his precarious being, stands obliged to him under the growing renewed title of a continual creation. But this is not all. There is yet,

Secondly, another title; whereby one person obtains a right to all that another can do; and that is possession. A title, every whit as transcendently in God as the former; as being founded in, and resulting from, his forementioned prerogative of a Creator. Nothing being more unquestionable, than *that the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof;* as the Psalmist declares, Psalm xxiv. 1.

He is the sole proprietor and grand landlord of the universe. And moreover, as all things were made by him, so they were made for him also; *He made all things for himself*, says the wisest of men, Prov. xvi. 4. He is the original efficient by which, and the great and last end for which, they are; for by him they begun, and in him they terminate: after which two essential relations borne by God to man on the one side, and obliging man to God on the other, can there be any thing that is good, either in the being or actions of the latter, which can be called perfectly his own? any thing which is not entirely due to God, and that by a complication of the most binding and indispensable titles? And if so, how and where can there be any room for such a thing as merit?

The civil law tells us, that servants have not properly a *jus*, a right or title, to any thing, by virtue whereof they can implead or bring an action against their lord, upon any account whatsoever; every such servant, as the law here speaks of, being not only his master's vassal, but also part of his possessions. And this right our Saviour himself owns, and sets forth to us by an elegant parable, couching under it as strong an argument, Luke xvii. 7, 8, 9. *Which of you*, saith he, *having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not.* Where we see upon what terms of right even

the most diligent and faithful servant stands with his master; who, after he had been toiling all day in his master's business, dressing and manuring his grounds, and watering them with the drops of his brow, comes home at length hungry and tired, (where, if he could find no reward for his hard service, yet one would think, that he might at least expect a discharge from any further work, and receive the present refreshments of his natural food,) yet even then his master renews his employment, delays his repast, and commands him to serve and attend him at his table, and with weary limbs and an empty stomach to expect a dismission at his pleasure; and all this, without so much as any thanks for his pains. In which neither is the master unjust, nor the servant injured: for he did no more than what his condition obliged him to; he did but his duty; and duty certainly neither is nor can be meritorious. Thus, I say, stands the case amongst men according to the difference of their respective conditions in this world. And if so, must not the same obligation, as it passes between God and man, rise as much higher, as the condition of a creature founds an obligation incomparably greater than that of a bare servant possibly can? And therefore, since man stands bound to God under both these titles, to wit, of production and possession, how can there be a greater paradox, than for such a contemptible, forlorn piece of living dirt to claim any thing upon the stock of merit from him, who is both his master and his maker too? No, the very best of men, upon the very best of their services, have no other plea before God but prayer; they may indeed beg an alms, but must not think to stand upon their terms. But,

Secondly, Not only the law of nature, and the reason of the thing itself, (as we have sufficiently shewn,) excludes a man from all plea of merit; but also that further obligation lying upon him and all his services from the positive law and command of God, equally cuts him off from the same: the known voice of that law being, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*, Matt. iv. 10. And then for the measure and extent of that service, it is to be *with all the heart, and all the strength, and all the soul*, Mark xii. 30. Which one comprehensive injunction, grasping in it all that human nature is able to do, and by consequence bringing all that can be done by man within the compass and verge of duty, has left no vacancy or possibility for merit to take place, till it be proved, that a man may actually do more than *with all his heart, and all his strength, and all his soul*, he is able to do: than which it is impossible even for common sense to conceive any thing more senseless and contradictious. And so I proceed to the

Second condition required to render an action meritorious; and that is, That it should really add to, and better the state of the person of whom it is to merit. The reason of which is, because all merit (as we have shewn before) consists properly in a right to receive some benefit, on the account of some benefit first done: the natural order of things requiring, that where a considerable advantage has been received, something of the like nature should be returned. For that otherwise, if one part of the world should be always upon the receiving hand, and never upon the restoring, that part would be a kind of monstrous dead weight upon the other, and all that

was good and useful to mankind would, by an enormous disparity, lean wholly on one side.

But, to bring the forementioned condition of merit home to our present purpose, and thereby to shew how far God is capable of receiving from man, and man of giving to God, it may not be amiss briefly to represent to ourselves what God is, and what man is; and, by consequence, how the case of giving and receiving must stand on God's part, and how on man's. And here, in the

1st place, God offers himself to our consideration as a being infinitely perfect, infinitely happy, and self-sufficient; depending upon no supply or revenue from abroad, but (as I may so express it) retreating wholly into himself, and there living for ever upon the inexhaustible stock of his own essential fulness; and as a fountain owes not its streams to any poor, adventitious infusions from without, but to the internal, unfailing plenties of its own springs; so this mighty, all-comprehending being, which we call God, needs no other happiness, but to contemplate upon that which he actually is, and ever was, and shall be possessed of. From all which it follows, that the divine nature and beatitude can no more admit of any addition to it, than we can add degrees to infinity, new measures to immensity, and further improvements to a boundless, absolute, unimprovable perfection: for such a being is the great God, who is one of the parties whom we are now discoursing of. Nevertheless, to carry the case a little further; supposing for the present, that the divine nature and felicity were capable of some further addition and increase, let us, in the

2nd place, cast our eye upon the other party con-

cerned, and consider, whether man be a being fit and able to make this addition; man, I say, that poor, slight, inconsiderable nothing; or at best a pitiful something, beholden to every one of the elements, as well as compounded of them, and living as an eleemosynary upon a perpetual contribution from all and every part of the creation; this creature clothing him, another feeding him, a third curing him when sick, and a fourth comforting and refreshing him when well. In a word, he subsists by the joint alms of heaven and earth, and stands at the mercy of every thing in nature, which is able either to help or hurt him.

And is this now the person who is to oblige his Maker? to indent and drive bargains with the Almighty? Those, I am sure, who in their several ages have been reputed most eminent for their knowledge of God and of themselves too, used to speak at much another rate concerning both. *My goodness*, says David, *extendeth not to thee*, Psalm xvi. 2. And again, *If thou be righteous*, says Elihu to Job, *what givest thou him? or what does he receive at thy hands?* Job xxxv. 7. So that St. Paul might well make that challenge, without expecting ever to see it answered, in Rom. xi. 35. *Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again?* For let man but first prove the debt, and the Almighty will be sure to pay it. But most fully of all does our Saviour himself determine this point in that remarkable conclusion of the forecited parable in Luke xvii. 10. where he instructs his disciples, *after they had done all that was commanded them, to acknowledge themselves unprofitable servants;* that is to say, such as God, upon no account whatsoever,

was or could be at all the better for. And a clearer text certainly, and more direct and home against all pretence of merit, neither law nor gospel can afford.

Nevertheless it must be confessed, that some have found out such an exposition of it, as, if admitted, renders it of no force at all against this doctrine of merit. For first, they absolutely cashier the literal, express sense of the words, and in the room of it introduce a figure called by the Greeks μείωσις, which, to diminish or degrade a thing, expresses it in terms representing it much less than indeed it is; as when we say a thing is smaller than an atom, less than nothing, and the like; such words are not to be understood literally, but import only, that the thing spoken of is very inconsiderable. Accordingly, when Christ bids his disciples, after their best and most exact performances, acknowledge themselves *unprofitable servants*, we are not, say these expositors, to conclude from hence, that really they were so, but that Christ only read them a lecture of humility and self-abasement towards God, in speaking but meanly and lowly of their own piety, how differently soever it might deserve to be valued, according to the strict estimate of the thing itself. So that by all this, it seems, our Saviour was only teaching those about him how to pass compliments upon Almighty God. Their professing of themselves *unprofitable servants* amounting to no more than if they had told him, they were his humble servants; the meaning of which words, (if they have any meaning at all,) the fashionable custom of genteel lying will much better account for, than the language of scripture (the word of truth) is able to do. But in the mean time, what an

insufferable perversion of the written word is it, to affix such a sense to any text of it, as this forced exposition here does! which manifestly turns a most devout confession to Almighty God into a piece of courtship; a principal truth into a mere trope or figure; and, in a word, one of the highest duties of a Christian into a false, fulsome, and, at best, an empty expression. And so I pass to the

Third condition required to render an action meritorious; and that is, That there be an equal proportion of value between the action and the reward. This being evident from the foundation already laid by us; to wit, That the nature of merit consists properly in exchange; and that, we know, must proceed according to a parity of worth on both sides; commutation being most properly between things equivalent. But now the prize we run for in all our religious performances, is no less a thing than life eternal, and a beatific enjoyment of God himself for ever; and can any man, not quite abandoned by his reason, imagine a few, weak, broken actions, a competent price for heaven and immortality? and fit to be laid in the balance with an *exceeding and eternal weight of glory?* Is there any thing in dust and ashes that can deserve to dwell with God, and to converse with angels? Or can we, who live by sense and act by sense do any thing worthy of those joys which not only exceed our senses, but also transcend our intellectuals? Can we do beyond what we can think, and deserve beyond what we can do? For let us rate our best and most exact services according to the strict rules of morality, and what man is able to carry so steady an hand in any religious performance, as to observe all those conditions that are

absolutely necessary to answer the full measures of the law? No, this is such a pitch of acting as the present strength of nature must not pretend to. And if not, how can an action, short of complete morality, set up for meritorious?

The Papists, we know, in their disputes upon this subject, distinguish merit into that which is *de condigno*, which merits a reward upon terms of justice, and by reason of the inherent worth and value of the work done; and that on the other side to be *de congruo*, which, though it cannot claim a reward upon those terms, and from the precise worth and value of the work itself, yet is such, that God would not act suitably and congruously to the equity and goodness of his nature, if he should not reward it. These two sorts of merit, I say, they hold, but are not yet agreed which of the two they should state the merit of their good works upon. For some boldly assert, that they merit the former way; to wit, by their own inherent worth and value; and some, that they merit only the latter way, that is, by being such as the equity and goodness of God cannot but reward; and lastly, others (as particularly Bellarmine) hold, that they merit both ways; to wit, partly by condignity, and partly by congruity.

In answer to which, without disputing any thing against their merit of condignity, (since it more than sufficiently confutes itself,) I utterly deny the whole foundation of their *merit de congruo*, as to any obligation on God's part to reward our religious services upon the score of equity; since upon that account God can be under no obligation to do any thing: forasmuch as there is no such thing as equity in God, distinct from his justice and mercy; and the exercise of his mercy must on all hands needs be granted

to be free; how much soever that of his justice may, by some, be thought otherwise.

Amongst men, I confess, there is such an obligation as that of equity; and the reason is, because men stand obliged by a superior law to exercise mercy as well as justice; which God does not: and therefore, though there may be such a thing as a *meritum de congruo* between man and man, yet between God and man (since God is under no obligation to shew mercy, where his own word has not first obliged him) no such merit can take place.

But, besides, this is not the point, whether or no it be congruous to the goodness of God, for him to reward such or such actions: for there be many thousands of things and actions very congruous for God to do, which yet by his nature he is not obliged to do, nor ever will do; so that the bare congruity of any thing or action to the divine nature lays no obligation upon God to do it at all. But the point lies here; to wit, whether it be so congruous to God to reward the obedience and good actions of men, that it is incongruous to his nature not to do it; and this I utterly deny. For if it were incongruous to his nature not to reward them, it would be necessary for him to reward them; and then indeed merit must upon equal necessity take place. But if God be not bound to reward every act, which it may be suitable or congruous for him to reward, (as we have shewn that he is not,) then *meritum de congruo* is but merit equivocally so called; and the forementioned division of merit is not a division of a genus into two several species, but only a distribution of an equivocal term into its several significations; and consequently to give the name of merit with respect to God, to that which is so only *de con-*

gruo, is a mere trifling about words, without any regard had to the sense of them. Nor let any one here object the frequent use of the terms *mereri* and *meritum* by the fathers and other ancient church-writers; for they use them not in a sense importing claim upon the score of strict justice, but only as they signify the actual obtainment of any thing from God upon the stock of free promise, by coming up to the conditions of it: which by no means reaches that sense of the word which we have been hitherto disputing against. In short therefore the question stands thus: Does this *meritum de congruo*, from the nature of the thing itself, oblige God to reward it, or does it not? If it does, then I am sure that merit of condignity does the same, and can do no more; and so the distinction between them is but verbal, and superfluous. But if, on the other hand, it does not oblige God, then I affirm that it is not so much as merit; for where there is no obligation on one side, there can be no merit on the other. To which we may add this further consideration, that the asserting of such a merit of congruity is altogether as arrogant, as to assert that of condignity; forasmuch as it equally binds God, and brings him under as great a necessity of rewarding, as the other can; and that, not by reason of his own free word and promise obliging him to it, (of which more anon,) but because of a certain worth and value inherent in the work itself; which makes it incongruous, and consequently impossible, for God not to reward it; since it must needs be impossible for him to do any thing incongruous to himself or to any of his attributes.

From all which it follows, that the third condition required to make an action meritorious, is here failing also. Which is, That the excellency of the work

be commensurate to the value of the reward. And so I am come at length to the

Fourth and last condition or ingredient of merit. And that is, That he who does a work whereby he would merit of another, does it solely by his own strength, and not by the strength or power of him from whom he is to merit. The reason of which is, because otherwise the work would not be entirely a man's own. And where there is no property, there can be no exchange; all exchange being the alienation of one property or title for another. And I have all along shewn, that the nature of merit is founded in commutation.

But now, how great an hand, or rather what a total influence, God has in all our actions, that known maxim, jointly received both by heathens and Christians, sufficiently demonstrates; namely, that *in him we live, and move, and have our being.* And so intimately and inseparably does this influence join itself with all the motions of the creature, that it puzzles the deepest and most acute philosophers to distinguish between the actions of second causes and the concurrence of the first, so as to rescue them from a downright identity. Accordingly, in Philip. ii. 13. the apostle tells us, that *it is God who worketh in us not only to do, but also to will, according to his good pleasure.* And if, in every good inclination, as well as action, God be the worker, we must needs be the recipient subjects of what is wrought: and to be recipient certainly is not meritorious.

In all the actions of men, though we naturally fix our eye only upon some visible agent, yet still there is a secret, invisible spring, which is the first mover of, and conveys an activity to, every power and fa-

culty both of soul and body, though it be discerned by neither. Upon which account it is, that St. Austin says, " that in all that God does for us, he only " crowns his own works in us;" the same hand still enabling us to do, which shall hereafter reward us for what we have done. And if, according to these terms, and those words also of the spouse to the same purpose, Cantic. i. 4. *Draw me, and I will follow thee;* our coming to God be from nothing else but from his drawing us to himself, how can we merit of him by our following him, or coming to him? For can any one oblige me by a present bought with my own money? or by giving me that which I first gave him? And yet the case here is much the same. For as apt as we are to flatter ourselves, and to think and speak big upon this subject, yet in truth, by all that we do or can do, we do but return God something of his own. Much like the rivers, which come rolling with a mighty noise, and pour themselves into the sea: and yet as high as they swell, and as loud as they roar, they only restore the sea her own waters; that which flows into her in one place, having been first drawn from her in another. In a word, can the earth repay the heavens for their influences, and the clouds for that verdure and fertility which they bestow upon it? or can dirt and dunghills requite the sun and the light for shining upon them? No certainly; and yet what poor shadows and faint representations are these of that infinitely greater inability even of the noblest of God's creatures to present him with any thing which they were not first beholden to him for! It is clear therefore, that since man, in all his duties and services, never had any thing of his own to set up with, but has trafficked all along upon a borrowed stock,

the fourth and last condition required to make his performances meritorious utterly fails him.

And thus I have distinctly gone over the several conditions of merit. As first, That the meritorious act be not due. Secondly, That it really add to, and better the condition of, him from whom it merits. Thirdly, That there be a parity of value between the work and the reward. And fourthly and lastly, That it be done by the sole strength of him who merits, and not by the help and strength of him from whom he merits. These four, I say, are the essential ingredients and indispensable conditions of merit. And yet not one of them all agrees to the very best of man's actions with reference to Almighty God. Nevertheless, in despite of all these deplorable impotences, we see what a towering principle of pride works in the hearts of men, and how mightily it makes them affect to be their own saviours, and even while they live upon God, to depend upon themselves: to be poor and proud being the truest character of man ever since the pride of our first parents threw us into this forlorn condition. And thus I have finished the second and main particular proposed from these words, and expressed in them; namely, That it is impossible for men, by their best services, to merit of God, or be profitable to him. I proceed now to the

Third particular, which exhibits to us something by way of inference from the two former; to wit, That this persuasion of man's being able to merit of God, is the source and foundation of two of the greatest corruptions of religion that have infested the Christian church; and those are Pelagianism and Popery. And,

First for Pelagianism. It chiefly springs from,

and is resolvable into, this one point, namely, that a man contributes something of his own, which he had not from God, towards his own salvation: and that, not a bare something only, but such a something also, as is the principal and most effectual cause of his salvation. Forasmuch as that which he receives from God (according to Pelagius) is only a power to will and to do; which a man may very well have, and carry to hell with him, as those who go to hell no doubt do. But that which obtains heaven, and actually saves a man, is the right use of that power, and the free determination of his will; which (as the same Pelagius teaches) a man has wholly from himself, and accordingly may wholly thank himself for. So that in answer to that question of the apostle, 1 Cor. iv. 7. *Quis te discrevit? Who made thee to differ from another?* and that, as to the grand discrimination of saint and reprobate? the Pelagian must reply, if he will speak pertinently and consistently with himself, "Why, I made myself to differ, "by using the powers which God gave me, as I "should do; which my neighbour did not: and for "that reason I go to heaven, and he to hell; and as "he can blame none but himself for the one, so I am "beholden to none but myself for the other." This, I say, is the main of the Pelagian divinity, though much more compendiously delivered in that known but lewd aphorism of theirs, *A Deo habemus quod sumus homines, a nobis autem ipsis quod sumus justi.* To which we may add another of their principles, to wit, that if a man does all that naturally he can do, (still understanding hereby the present state of nature,) God is bound in justice to supply whatsoever more shall be necessary to salvation. Which premises, if they do not directly and unavoidably infer

in man a power of meriting of God, the world is yet to seek, what the nature and notion of merit is. Accordingly, both Gelasius and St. Austin, in setting down the points wherein the Catholic church differed from the Pelagians, assign this for one of the chief, that the Pelagians held *gratiam Dei secundum hominum merita conferri.* And the truth is, upon their principles a man may even merit the incarnation of Christ: for if there be no saving grace without it, and a man may do that which shall oblige God in justice to vouchsafe him such grace, (as with no small self-contradiction these men use to speak,) then, let them qualify and soften the matter with what words they please, I affirm, that, upon these terms, a man really merits his salvation, and, by consequence, all that is or can be necessary thereunto.

In the mean time, throughout all this Pelagian scheme, we have not so much as one word of man's natural impotency to spiritual things, (though inculcated and wrote in both Testaments with a sunbeam,) nor consequently of the necessity of some powerful divine energy to bend, incline, and effectually draw man's will to such objects as it naturally resists and is averse to: not a word, I say, of this, or any thing like it; (for those men used to explode and deny it all, as their modern offspring amongst us also do;) and yet this passed for sound and good divinity in the church in St. Austin's time; and within less than an hundred years since, in our church too, till Pelagianism and Socinianism, deism, tritheism, atheism, and a spirit of innovation, the root of all, and worse than all, broke in upon us, and by false schemes and models countenanced and encouraged, have given quite a new face to things;

though a new face is certainly the worst and most unbecoming that can be set upon an old religion But,

Secondly, To proceed to another sort of men famous for corrupting Christianity more ways than one; to wit, those of the church of Rome. We shall find, that this doctrine of man's being able to merit of God is one of the chief foundations of Popery also: even the great Diana, which some of the most experienced craftsmen in the world do with so much zeal sacrifice to and make shrines for; and by so doing get their living, and that a very plentiful and splendid one too; as knowing full well, that without it the grandeur of their church (which is all their religion) would quickly fall to the ground. For if there be no merit of good works, then no supererogation; and if no supererogation, no indulgences; and if no indulgences, then it is to be feared that the silversmith's trade will run low, and the credit of the pontifical bank begin to fail. So that the very marrow, the life and spirit of Popery lies in a stiff adherence to this doctrine: the grand question still insisted upon by these merchants being, *Quid dabitis?* and the great commodity set to sale by them being merit. For can any one think, that the Pope and his cardinals, and the rest of their ecclesiastical grandees, care a rush whether the will of man be free, or no, (as the Jesuits state the freedom of it on the one side, and Dominicans and Jansenists on the other,) or that they at all concern themselves about justification and free grace, but only as the artificial stating of such points may sometimes serve them in their spiritual traffick, and now and then help them to turn the penny. No; they value not their schools any

further than they furnish their markets; nor regard any gospel but that of cardinal Palavicini; which professedly owns it for the main design of Christianity, to make men as rich, as great, and as happy as they can be in this world. And the grand instrument to compass all this by is the doctrine of merit. For how else could it be, that so many in that communion should be able to satisfy themselves in doing so much less than they know they are required to do for the saving of their souls, but that they are taught to believe, that there are some again in the world who do a great deal more than they are bound to do, and so may very well keep their neighbour's lamp from going out, by having oil enough both to supply their own, and a comfortable overplus besides, to lend, or (which is much better) to sell, in such a case. In a word, take away the foundation, and the house must fall; and, in like manner, beat down merit, and down goes Popery too. And so at length (that I may not trespass upon your patience too much) I descend to the

Fourth and last particular, proposed at first from the words; which was, to remove an objection naturally apt to issue from the foregoing particulars. The objection is obvious, and the answer to it needs not be long. It proceeds thus.

If the doctrine hitherto advanced be true, can there be a greater discouragement to men in their Christian course, than to consider, that all their obedience, all their duties and choicest performances, are nothing worth in the sight of God? and that they themselves, after they have done their best, their utmost, and their very all in his service, are still, for all that, useless and unprofitable, and such as can

plead no recompence at all at his hands? This, you will say, is very hard; but to it I answer,

First, That it neither ought nor uses to be any discouragement to a beggar (as we all are in respect of Almighty God) to continue asking an alms, and doing all that he can to obtain it, though he knows he can do nothing to claim it. But,

Secondly, I deny, that our disavowing this doctrine of merit cuts us off from all plea to a recompence for our Christian obedience at the hands of God. It cuts us off indeed from all plea to it upon the score of condignity and strict justice: but then should we not, on the other side, consider, whether God's justice be the only thing that can oblige him in his transactings with men? For does not his veracity and his promise oblige him as much as his justice can? And has he not positively promised to reward our sincere obedience? Which promise, though his mere grace and goodness induced him to make, yet his essential truth stands obliged to see performed. For though some have ventured so far as to declare God under no obligation to inflict the eternal torments of hell (how peremptorily soever threatened by him) upon men dying in their sins; yet I suppose none will be so hardy, or rather shameless, as to affirm it free for God to perform or not perform his promise; the obligation of which being so absolute and unalterable, I do here further affirm, that, upon the truest and most assured principles of practical reason, there is as strong and as enforcing a motive from the immutable truth of God's promise, to raise men to the highest and most heroic acts of a Christian life, as if every such single act could by its own intrinsic worth merit a glorious eternity. For, to speak the

real truth and nature of things, that which excites endeavour, and sets obedience on work, is not properly a belief or persuasion of the merit of our works, but the assurance of our reward. And can we have a greater assurance of this, than that truth itself, which cannot break its word, has promised it? For the most high and holy One (as we have shewn, and may with reverence speak) has pawned his word, his name, and his honour, to reward the steadfast, finally persevering obedience of every one within the covenant of grace, notwithstanding its legal imperfection.

And therefore, though we have all the reason in the world to blush at the worthless emptiness of our best duties, and to be ashamed of the poorness and shortness of our most complete actions, and, in a word, to think as meanly of them, and of ourselves for them, as God himself does, yet still let us build both our practice and our comfort upon this one conclusion, as upon a rock; that though, after we have done all, we are still unprofitable servants, yet because we have done all, God has engaged himself to be a gracious master.

To whom therefore be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

A SERMON

PREACHED AT CHRIST-CHURCH IN OXFORD,

BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY,

OCTOBER 29, 1693.

LUKE xi. 35.

Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness.

AS light is certainly one of the most glorious and useful creatures that ever issued from the wisdom and power of the great Creator of the world; so, were the eye of the soul as little weakened by the fall as the eye of the body, no doubt the light within us would appear as much more glorious than the light without us, as the spiritual, intellectual part of the creation exceeds the glories of the sensible and corporeal. As to the nature of which light, to give some account of it before I proceed further, and that without entering into those various notions of it which some have amused the world with; it is, in short, that which philosophers in their discourses about the mind of man, and the first origins of knowledge, do so much magnify by the name of *recta ratio;* that great source and principle (as they would have it) both of their philosophy and religion.

For the better explication of which, I must, according to a common but necessary distinction, (and elsewhere made use of by me,) observe, that this *recta ratio* may be taken in a double sense.

First, For those maxims or general truths, which, being collected by the observations of reason, and formed thereby into certain propositions, are the grounds and principles by which men govern both their discourse and practice, according to the nature of the objects that come before them: or,

Secondly, It may be taken for that faculty or power of the soul, by which it forms these maxims or propositions, and afterwards discourses upon them. And so no doubt it is to be taken here.

For propositions themselves, as to the truth of them, are neither capable of increase or decrease, improvement or diminution; but the powers and faculties of the soul are capable of both; that is, of becoming stronger or weaker, according as men shall use or abuse, cultivate or neglect them. Upon which account this *recta ratio* can be nothing else but that intellectual power or faculty of the soul which every one is naturally endowed with.

To which faculty, as there belong two grand and principal offices; to wit, one to inform or direct, and the other to command or oblige; so the said faculty sustains a different σχέσις or denomination, according to each of them. For as it serves to inform the soul, by discovering things to it, so it is called the light of nature; but as it obliges the soul to do this, or forbear that, (which it does, as it is actuated or informed with those forementioned general truths or maxims,) so it is called the law of nature: which two offices, though belonging to one and the same

faculty, are very different. For the former of them, to wit, its enlightening or informing quality, extends much further than its obliging virtue does; even to all things knowable in the mind of man; but the latter only to such things as are matter of practice, and so fall under a moral consideration. Besides, that this obliging quality must needs also presuppose the enlightening quality as essentially going before it. For as no law can bind till it be notified or promulged, so neither can this faculty of the soul oblige a man till it has first informed him. By which we see, that the light of nature, according to the essential order of things, precedes the law of nature, and consequently, in strictness of speech, ought to be distinguished from it, how much soever some have thought fit to confound them. And I doubt not but it is this which the text here principally intends by *the light within us.*

Nevertheless, since the word *conscience* takes in both, and signifies as well a *light to inform,* as it imports and carries with it also a *law to oblige* us, I shall indifferently express this light by the name of *conscience* (as a term equivalent to it) in all the following particulars; but still this shall be with respect to its informing, rather than to its obliging office. Forasmuch as it is the former of these only which is the proper effect of light, and not the latter. For though conscience be both a light and (as it commands under God) a law too; yet as it is a light, it is not formally a law. For if it were, then whatsoever it discovered to us, it would also oblige us to. But this is not so; since it both may and does discover to us the indifferent nature of many

things and actions without obliging us either to the practice or forbearance of them; which one consideration alone is sufficient to set the difference between the enlightening and the obliging office of conscience clear beyond all objection.

And thus much I thought fit to premise concerning the nature of the light here spoken of by our Saviour, and intended for the subject of the present discourse. Which light, as it is certainly the great and sovereign gift of God to mankind, for the guidance and government of their actions, in all that concerns them with reference to this life or a better; so it is also as certain, that it is capable of being turned into darkness, and thereby made wholly useless for so noble a purpose.

For so much the words of the text import; nor do they import only a bare possibility that it may be so, but also a very high probability that, without an extraordinary prevention, it will be so. Forasmuch as all warning, in the very reason of the thing, and according to the natural force of such expressions, implies in it these two things. First, some very considerable evil or mischief warned against; and secondly, an equal danger of falling into it: without which all warning would be not only superfluous, but ridiculous.

Now both these, in the present case, are very great; as will appear by a distinct consideration of each of them. And

First, For the evil which we are warned or cautioned against; to wit, the turning of this light within us into darkness. An evil so unconceivably great and comprehensive, that to give an account of

the utmost extent of it, would pose our thoughts, as well as nonplus our expressions. But yet to help our apprehensions of it the best we can, let us but consider with ourselves those intolerable evils which bodily blindness, deafness, stupefaction, and an utter deprivation of all sense must unavoidably subject the outward man to. For what is one in such a condition able to do? And what is he not liable to suffer? And yet doing and suffering, upon the matter, comprehend all that concerns a man in this world. If such an one's enemy seeks his life (as he may be sure that some or other will, and possibly such an one as he takes for his truest friend) in this forlorn case, he can neither see nor hear, nor perceive his approach, till he finds himself actually in his murdering hands. He can neither encounter nor escape him, neither in his own defence give nor ward off a blow: for whatsoever blinds a man, *ipso facto* disarms him; so that being thus bereft, both of his sight and of all his senses besides, what such an one can be fit for, unless it be to set up for prophecy, or believe transubstantiation, I cannot imagine.

These, I say, are some of those fatal mischiefs, which corporal blindness and insensibility expose the body to: and are not those of a spiritual blindness unexpressibly greater? For must not a man labouring under this be utterly at loss, how to distinguish between the two grand governing concerns of life, good and evil? And may not the ignorance of these cost us as dear as the knowledge of them did our first parents? Life and death, vice and virtue, come alike to such an one; as all things are of the same colour to him who cannot see. His whole

soul is nothing but night and confusion, darkness and indistinction. He can neither see the way to happiness; and how then should he choose it? nor yet to destruction, and how then should he avoid it? For where there is no sense of things, there can be no distinction; and where there is no distinction, there can be no choice.

A man destitute of this directing and distinguishing light within him, is and must be at the mercy of every thing in nature, that would impose or serve a turn upon him. So that whatsoever the devil will have him do, that he must do. Whithersoever any exorbitant desire or design hurries him, thither he must go. Whatsoever any base interest shall prescribe, that he must set his hand to, whether his heart goes along with it, or no. If he be a statesman, he must be as willing to sell, as the enemy of his country can be to buy. If a churchman, he must be ready to surrender and give up the church, and make a sacrifice of the altar itself, though he lives by it; and, in a word, take that for a full discharge from all his subscriptions and obligations to it, to do as he is bid. Which being the case of such as steer by a false light, certainly no slave in the galleys is or can be in such a wretched condition of slavery, as a man thus abandoned by conscience, and bereft of all inward principles that should either guide or control him in the course of his conversation. So that we see here the transcendent greatness of the evil which we stand cautioned against. But then,

Secondly, If it were an evil that seldom happened, that very hardly and rarely befell a man, this might in a great measure supersede the strictness of the

caution; but, on the contrary, we shall find, that as great as the evil is which we are to fence against, (and that is as great as the capacities of an immortal soul,) the greatness of the danger is still commensurate: for it is a case that usually happens; it is a mischief as frequent in the event, as it is or can be fatal in the effect. It is as in a common plague, in which the infection is as hard to be escaped, as the distemper to be cured: for that which brings this darkness upon the soul is sin. And as the state of nature now is, the soul is not so close united to the body, as sin is to the soul; indeed so close is the union between them, that one would even think the soul itself (as much a spirit as it is) were the matter, and sin the form, in our present constitution. In a word, there is a set combination of all without a man and all within him, of all above ground and all under it, (if hell be so,) first to put out his eyes, and then to draw or drive him headlong into perdition. From all which, I suppose, we must needs see reason more than sufficient for this admonition of our Saviour, *Take heed that the light which is in thee be not darkness.* An admonition founded upon no less a concern, than all that a man can save, and all that he can lose to eternity. And thus having shewn both the vastness of the evil itself, and the extreme danger we are in of it; since no man can be at all the wiser or the safer barely for knowing his danger, without a vigorous application to prevent it; and since the surest and most rational preventive of it is to know by what arts and methods our enemy will encounter us, and by which he is most likely to prevail over us, we will inquire into and consider those ways and means by which he com-

monly attempts, and too frequently effects this so dismal a change upon us, as to strip us even of the poor remains of our fallen nature, by turning the last surviving spark of it, this *light within us*, into darkness.

For this must be acknowledged, that no man living, in respect of conscience, is born blind, but makes himself so. None can strike out the eye of his conscience but himself: for nothing can put it out, but that which sins it out. And upon this account it must be confessed, that a man may love his sin so enormously much, as, by a very ill application of the apostle's expression, even to *pluck out his own eyes, and give them to it;* as indeed every obstinate sinner in the world does.

Our present business therefore shall be (and that as a completion of what I discoursed formerly upon conscience in this place) to shew how and by what courses this divine light, this candle of the Lord, comes first to burn faint and dim, and so by a gradual decay fainter and fainter, till at length by a total extinction it quite sinks to nothing, and so dies away. And this I shall do, first, in general, and secondly, in particular.

And first in general, I shall lay down these two observations.

First, that whatsoever defiles the conscience, in the same degree also darkens it.

As to the philosophy of which, how and by what way this is done, it is hard to conceive, and much harder to explain. Our great unacquaintance with the nature of spiritual, immaterial beings leaving us wholly in the dark as to any explicit knowledge, either how they work, or how they are worked upon.

So that in discoursing of these things we are forced to take up with analogy and allusion, instead of evidence and demonstration. Nevertheless, the thing itself is certain, be the manner of effecting it never so unaccountable.

Yet thus much we find, that there is something in sin analogous to blackness, as innocence is frequently in scripture expressed and set forth to us by whiteness. All guilt blackens (or does something equivalent to the blackening of) the soul; as where pitch cleaves to any thing, it is sure to leave upon it both its foulness and its blackness together: and then we know, that blackness and darkness are inseparable.

Some of the ablest of the Peripatetic school (not without countenance from Aristotle himself, in the fifth chapter of his third book, περὶ ψυχῆς) hold, that besides the native, inherent light of the intellect, (which is essential to it, as it is a faculty made to apprehend, and take in its object after a spiritual way,) there is also another light, in the nature of a medium, beaming in upon it by a continual efflux and emanation from the great fountain of light, and irradiating this intellectual faculty, together with the species or representations of things imprinted thereupon. According to which doctrine it seems with great reason to follow, that whatsoever interposes between the mind and those irradiations from God, (as all sin more or less certainly does,) must needs hinder the entrance and admission of them into the mind; and then darkness must by necessary consequence ensue, as being nothing else but the absence or privation of light.

For the further illustration of which notion, we may observe, that the understanding, the mind, or

conscience of man, (which we shall here take for the same thing,) seem to bear much the same respect to God, which glass or crystal does to the light or sun: which appears indeed to the eye a bright and a shining thing; nevertheless this shining is not so much from any essential light or brightness existing in the glass itself, (supposing that there be any such in it,) as it is from the porousness of its body, rendering it diaphanous, and thereby fit to receive and transmit those rays of light, which, falling upon it, and passing through it, represent it to common view as a luminous body. But now let any thing of dirt or foulness sully this glass, and so much of the shine or brightness of it is presently gone, because so much of the light is thereby hindered from entering into it, and making its way through it. But if, besides all this, you should also draw some black colour or deep die upon it, either by paint, or otherwise; why then no brightness could be seen in it at all, but the light being hereby utterly shut out, the glass or crystal would shine or glister no more than a piece of wood or a clod of earth.

In like manner every act of sin, every degree of guilt, does in its proportion cast a kind of soil or foulness upon the intellectual part of the soul, and thereby intercepts those blessed irradiations which the divine nature is continually darting in upon it. Nor is this all, but there are also some certain sorts and degrees of guilt, so very black and foul, that they fall like an huge thick blot upon this faculty; and so sinking into it, and settling within it, utterly exclude all those illuminations which would otherwise flow into it, and rest upon it from the great *Father of lights;* and this not from any failure or defect in the

illumination itself, but from the indisposition of the object, which, being thus blackened, can neither let in nor transmit the beams that are cast upon it.

I will not affirm this to be a perfect exemplification of the case before us, but I am sure it is a lively illustration of it, and may be of no small use to such as shall throughly consider it. But however (as I shewed before) the thing itself is certain and unquestionable, guilt and darkness being always so united, that you shall never find darkness mentioned in scripture in a moral sense, but you shall also find it derived from sin, as its direct cause, and joined with it as its constant companion: for, by a mutual production, sin both causes darkness, and is caused by it. Let this therefore be our first general observation; That whatsoever pollutes or fouls the conscience, in the same degree also darkens it.

Secondly, Our other general observation shall be this; That whatsoever puts a bias upon the judging faculty of conscience, weakens, and, by consequence, darkens the light of it. A clear and a right judging conscience must be always impartial; and that it may be so, it must be perfectly indifferent: that is to say, it must be free and disencumbered from every thing which may in the least sway or incline it one way rather than another, beyond what the sole and mere evidence of things would naturally lead it to. In a word, it must judge all by evidence, and nothing by inclination.

And this our blessed Saviour, with admirable emphasis and significance of expression, calls the *singleness of the eye*, in the verse immediately before the text. *If thine eye*, says he, *be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.* That is, nothing extra-

neous must cleave to or join with the eye in the act of seeing, but it must be left solely and entirely to itself, and its bare object; as naked as truth, as pure, simple, and unmixed as sincerity. Otherwise the whole operation of it unavoidably passes into cheat, fallacy, and delusion. As, to make the case yet more particular, if you put a muffler before the eye, it cannot see; if any mote or dust falls into it, it can hardly see; and if there be any soreness or pain in it, it shuns the light, and will not see. And all this by a very easy, but yet certain and true analogy, is applicable to the eye of the soul, the conscience; and the instance is verifiable upon it, in every one of the alleged particulars.

In short, whatsoever bends or puts a bias upon the judging faculty of conscience, represents things to it by a false light; and whatsoever does so, causes in it a false and erroneous judgment of things. And all error or falsehood is, in the very nature of it, a real, intellectual darkness; and consequently must diffuse a darkness upon the mind, so far as it is affected and possessed with it. And thus much for our second general observation.

From whence we shall now pass to particulars. In the assigning and stating of which, as I shewed before, that sin in general was the general cause of this darkness, so the particular causes of it must be fetched from the particular kinds and degrees of sin.

Now sin may be considered three ways.

First, In the act.

Secondly, In the habit or custom.

Thirdly, In the affection, or productive principle of it.

In all which we shall shew what a darkening and malign influence sin has upon the conscience or mind of man; and consequently with what extreme care and severe vigilance the conscience ought to be guarded and watched over in all these respects. And,

First, For sin considered in the single act. Every particular commission of any great sin, such as are, for instance, the sins of perjury, of murder, of uncleanness, of drunkenness, of theft, and, above all, of undutifulness to parents, (which being a thing so much against nature, nothing in nature can be said for it;) these, I say, and the like capital, soul-wasting sins, even in any one single act or commission of them, have a strangely efficacious power to cloud and darken the conscience. Some of the schoolmen are of opinion, that one single act, if great and extraordinary, has in it the force of many ordinary and lesser acts, and so may produce a habit: which opinion, how true soever it may be of an act of demonstration producing a habit of science in the intellect, yet I cannot think it true of any moral habits whatsoever. For it is not to be thought that St. Peter's denying and forswearing his Lord left behind it a habit of unbelief; nor that David's murder and adultery rendered him habitually murderous and adulterous. For no doubt it was not so.

But this I say, that every single gross act of sin is much the same thing to the conscience, that a great blow or fall is to the head; it stuns and bereaves it of all use of its senses for a time. Thus in the two forementioned sins of David, they so mazed and even stupified his conscience, that it lay as it were in a swoon, and void of all spiritual sense for

almost a whole year. For we do not find that he came to himself, or to any true sight or sense of his horrid guilt, till Nathan the prophet came and roused him up with a message from God; nor did Nathan come to him till after the child, begotten in that adultery, was born. Such a terrible deadness and stupefaction did those two sins bring upon his soul for so many months together, during which time, whatsoever notion of murder and adultery David might have in general, yet no doubt he had but very slight and superficial thoughts of the heinousness of his own in particular. And what was the reason of this? Why, his conscience was cast into a dead sleep, and could not so much as open its eyes, so as to be able to look either upwards or inwards. This was his sad and forlorn estate, notwithstanding that long course of piety and converse with God, which he was now grown old in. For he had been an early practiser, and an eminent proficient in the ways of God, and was now past the fiftieth year of his age; and yet we see that one or two such gross sins dulled and deadened the spiritual principle within him to such a degree, that they left him for a long time, as it were, dozed and benumbed, blind and insensible; and, no doubt, had not a peculiar grace from God raised him up and recovered him, he had continued so to his life's end.

For this is most certain, and worth our best observation; that whatsoever carries a man off from God, will, in the natural course and tendency of it, carry him still further and further, till at length it leaves him neither will nor power to return. For repentance is neither the design nor work of mere nature, which, immediately after the commission of

sin, never puts a man upon disowning or bewailing it, but upon studying and casting about him how to palliate and extenuate, and, rather than fail, how to plead for and defend it. This was the course, which Adam took upon the first sin that ever man committed: and the same course in the same case will be taken by all the sons of Adam (if left to themselves) as long as the world stands.

Secondly, The frequent and repeated practice of sin has also a mighty power in it to obscure and darken the natural light of conscience. Nothing being more certainly true, nor more universally acknowledged, than that custom of sinning takes away the sense of sin; and we may add, the sight of it too. For though the darkness consequent upon any one gross act of sin be, as we have shewed, very great, yet that which is caused by custom of sinning is much greater, and more hardly curable. Particular acts of sin do, as it were, cast a mist before the eye of conscience, but customary sinning brings a kind of film upon it, and it is not an ordinary skill which can take off that. The former only closes the eye, but this latter puts it out; as leaving upon the soul a wretched impotence, either to judge or to do well; much like the spots of the leopard, not to be changed, or the blackness of an Ethiopian, not to be washed off. For by these very things the Spirit of God, in Jer. xiii. 23, expresses the iron invincible force of a wicked custom.

Now the reason, I conceive, that such a custom brings such a darkness upon the mind or conscience, is this: that a man naturally designs to please himself in all that he does; and that it is impossible for

him to find any action really pleasurable, while he judges it absolutely unlawful; since the sting of this must needs take off the relish of the other, and it would be an intolerable torment to any man's mind, to be always doing, and always condemning himself for what he does. And for this cause a man shuts his eyes and stops his ears against all that his reason would tell him of the sinfulness of that practice, which long custom and frequency has endeared to him. So that he becomes studiously and affectedly ignorant of the illness of the course he takes, that he may the more sensibly taste the pleasure of it. And thus, when an inveterate, imperious custom has so overruled all a man's faculties, as neither to suffer his eyes to see, nor his ears to hear, nor his mind to think of the evil of what he does; that is, when all the instruments of knowledge are forbid to do their office, ignorance and obscurity must needs be upon the whole soul. For when the windows are stopped up, no wonder if the whole room be dark.

The truth is, such an habitual frequency of sinning, does, as it were, bar and bolt up the conscience against the sharpest reproofs and the most convincing instructions; so that when God, by the thunder of his judgments and the voice of his ministers, has been ringing hell and vengeance into the ears of such a sinner, perhaps, like Felix, he may tremble a little for the present, and seem to yield and fall down before the overpowering evidence of the conviction; but after a while, custom overcoming conscience, the man goes his way, and though he is convinced and satisfied what he ought to do, yet he actually does what he uses to do: and all this, because,

through the darkness of his intellect, he judges the present pleasure of such a sinful course an overbalance to the evil of it.

For this is certain, that nature has placed all human choice in such an essential dependence upon the judgment, that no man does any thing, though never so vile, wicked, and inexcusable, but, all circumstances considered, he judges it, *pro hic et nunc*, absolutely better for him to do it, than not to do it. And what a darkness and delusion must conscience needs be under, while it makes a man judge that really best for him, which directly tends to, and generally ends in, his utter ruin and damnation! Custom is said to be a second nature, and if by the first we are already so bad, by the second, to be sure, we shall be much worse.

Thirdly, Every corrupt passion or affection of the mind will certainly pervert the judging, and obscure and darken the discerning power of conscience. The affections, which the Greeks call *πάθη*, and the Latins *affectus animi*, are of much the same use to the soul, which the members are of to the body; serving as the proper instruments of most of its actions; and are always attended with a certain preternatural motion of the blood and spirits peculiar to each passion or affection. And as for the seat or fountain of them, philosophers both place them in and derive them from the heart. But not to insist upon mere speculations: the passions or affections are, as I may so call them, the mighty flights and sallyings out of the soul upon such objects as come before it; and are generally accompanied with such vehemence, that the Stoics reckoned them, in their very nature and essence, as so many irregularities and deviations

from right reason, and by no means incident to a wise or good man.

But though better philosophy has long since exploded this opinion, and Christianity, which is the greatest and the best, has taught us, that we may *be angry, and yet not sin*, Ephes. iv. 26. and that *godly sorrow* is neither a paradox nor a contradiction, 2 Cor. vii. 10. and consequently, that in every passion or affection there is something purely natural, which may both be distinguished and divided too from what is sinful and irregular; yet, notwithstanding all this, it must be confessed, that the nature of the passions is such, that they are extremely prone and apt to pass into excess, and that when they do so, nothing in the world is a greater hinderance to the mind or reason of man, from making a true, clear, and exact judgment of things, than the passions thus wrought up to any thing of ferment or agitation. It being as impossible to keep the judging faculty steady in such a case, as it would be to view a thing distinctly and perfectly through a perspective glass, held by a shaking, paralytic hand.

When the affections are once engaged, the judgment is always partial and concerned. There is a strong bent or bias upon it, it is possessed and gained over, and as it were feed and retained in their cause, and thereby made utterly unable to carry such an equal regard to the object, as to consider truth nakedly, and stripped of all foreign respects; and as such to make it the rigid, inflexible rule, which it is to judge by; especially where duty is the thing to be judged of. For a man will hardly be brought to judge right and true, when by such a judgment he is sure to condemn himself.

But this being a point of such high and practical importance, I will be yet more particular about it, and shew severally, in several corrupt and vicious affections, how impossible it is for a man to keep his conscience rightly informed, and fit to guide and direct him in all the arduous perplexing cases of sin and duty, while he is actually under the power of any of them. This, I know, men generally are not apt to believe, or to think, that the flaws or failures of their morals can at all affect their intellectuals. But I doubt not but to make it not only credible, but undeniable.

Now the vicious affections which I shall single and cull out of those vast numbers, which the heart of man, that great storehouse of the devil, abounds with, as some of the principal, which thus darken and debauch the conscience, shall be these three.

First, Sensuality. Secondly, Covetousness. Thirdly, Ambition.

Of each of which I shall speak particularly: and,

First, for sensuality, or a vehement delight in and pursuit of bodily pleasures. We may truly say of the body, with reference to the soul, what was said by the poet of an ill neighbour, *Nemo tam prope tam proculque:* None so nearly joined in point of vicinity, and yet so widely distant in point of interest and inclinations.

The ancient philosophers generally holding the soul of man to be a spiritual, immaterial substance, could give no account of the several failures and defects in the operations of it, (which they were sufficiently sensible of,) but from its immersion into, and intimate conjunction with matter, called by the Greeks ὕλη. And accordingly all their complaints

and accusations were still levelled at this ὕλη, as the only cause of all that they found amiss in the whole frame and constitution of man's nature. In a word, whatsoever was observed by them, either irregular or defective in the workings of the mind, was all charged upon the body, as its great clog and impediment. As the skilfullest artist in the world would make but sorry work of it, should he be forced to make use of tools no way fit for his purpose.

But whether the fault be in the spiritual or corporeal part of our nature, or rather in both, certain it is, that no two things in the world do more rise and grow upon the fall of each other, than the flesh and the spirit: they being like a kind of balance in the hand of nature, so that as one mounts up, the other still sinks down; and the high estate of the body seldom or never fails to be the low, declining estate of the soul. Which great contrariety and discord between them, the apostle describes, as well as words can do, Gal. v. 17. *The flesh*, says he, *lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit lusteth against the flesh: and these two are contrary;* like two mighty princes whose territories join, they are always encroaching and warring upon one another. And as it most commonly falls out, that the worse cause has the best success; so when the flesh and the spirit come to a battle, it is seldom but the flesh comes off victorious. And therefore the same great apostle, who so constantly exercised himself to keep a conscience void of offence, did as constantly and severely exercise himself *to keep under his body, and bring it into subjection*, 1 Cor. ix. 27. And the same in all ages has been the judgment and practice of all such as have had any experience in the ways

of God and the true methods of religion. For all bodily pleasure dulls and weakens the operations of the mind, even upon a natural account, and much more upon a spiritual. Now the pleasures which chiefly affect, or rather bewitch the body, and by so doing become the very pest and poison of the nobler and intellectual part of man, are those false and fallacious pleasures of lust and intemperance:

Of each of which severally: and

First, for lust. Nothing does or can darken the mind or conscience of man more: nay, it has a peculiar efficacy this way, and for that cause may justly be ranked amongst the very powers of darkness: it being that which, as naturalists observe, strikes at the proper seat of the understanding, the brain: something of that *blackness of darkness* mentioned in the thirteenth of St. Jude, seeming to be of the very nature as well as punishment of this vice.

Nor does only the reason of the thing itself, but also the examples of such as have been possessed with it, demonstrate as much.

For had not Samson, think we, an intolerable darkness and confusion upon his understanding, while he ran roving after every strumpet in that brutish manner that he did? Was it not the eye of his conscience which his Delilah first put out, and so of a judge of Israel rendered himself really a judgment upon them? And when the two angels (as we read in Gen. xix.) struck those monsters, the men of Sodom, with blindness, had not their own detestable lust first stricken them with a greater? Or could Herod have ever thought himself obliged by the religion of an oath to have murdered the Baptist, had

not his lust and his Herodias imprisoned and murdered his conscience first? For surely the common light of nature could not but teach him, that no oath or vow whatsoever could warrant the greatest prince upon earth to take away the life of an innocent person. But it seems his besotted conscience having broken through the seventh commandment, the sixth stood too near it to be safe long: and therefore his two great casuists, the devil and his Herodias, (the worse devil of the two,) having allowed him to lie and wallow in adultery so long, easily persuaded him that the same salvo might be found out for murder also. So that it was his lust obstinately continued in, which thus darkened and deluded his conscience; and the same will, no doubt, darken and delude, and in the end extinguish the conscience of any man breathing, who shall surrender himself up to it. The *light within him* shall grow every day less and less, and at length totally and finally go out, and that in a stink too. So hard, or rather utterly unfeasible is it, for men to be zealous votaries of the blind god, without losing their eyes in his service, and it is well if their noses do not follow. From all which it appears, what a paradox it is in morals, for any one under the dominion of his lust, to think to have a right judgment in things relating to the state of his soul: and the same, in the

Second place, holds equally in that other branch of sensuality, intemperance; whereupon we find them both joined together by the prophet Hosea, iv. 11. *Whoredom*, says he, *and wine take away the heart;* that is, according to the language of holy writ, a man's judging and discerning abilities. And therefore, whosoever would preserve these faculties

(especially as to their discernment of spiritual objects) quick and vigorous, must be sure to keep the upper region of his soul clear and serene; which the fumes of meat and drink luxuriously taken in will never suffer it to be. We know the method which this high and exact pattern of spiritual prudence, St. Paul, took to keep the great sentinel of his soul, his conscience, always vigilant and circumspect. It was by a constant and severe temperance, heightened with frequent watchings and fastings, as he himself tells us, 2 Cor. xi. 27. *in watchings often, in fastings often*, &c. This was the discipline which kept his senses exercised to a sure and exquisite discrimination of good and evil, and made the lamp within him shine always with a bright and a triumphant flame.

But gluttony, and all excess, either in eating or drinking, strangely clouds and dulls the intellectual powers; and then it is not to be expected that the conscience should bear up, when the understanding is drunk down. An epicure's practice naturally disposes a man to an epicure's principles; that is, to an equal looseness and dissolution in both: and he who makes his belly his business will quickly come to have a conscience of as large a swallow as his throat; of which there wants not several scandalous and deplorable instances. Loads of meat and drink are fit for none but a beast of burden to bear; and he is much the greater beast of the two, who carries his burden in his belly, than he who carries it upon his back. On the contrary, nothing is so great a friend to the mind of man, as abstinence; it strengthens the memory, clears the apprehension, and sharpens the judgment; and, in a word, gives reason its full

scope of acting; and when reason has that, it is always a diligent and faithful handmaid to conscience. And therefore, where men look no further than mere nature, (as many do not,) let no man expect to keep his gluttony and his parts, his drunkenness and his wit, his revellings and his judgment, and much less his conscience, together: for neither grace nor nature will have it so. It is an utter contradiction to the methods of both. *Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes?* says Solomon, Prov. xxiii. 29. Which question he himself presently answers in the next verse, *They who tarry long at the wine, they who seek after mixed wine.* So say I, Who has a stupid intellect, a broken memory, and a blasted wit, and (which is worse than all) a blind and benighted conscience, but the intemperate and luxurious, the epicure and the smell-feast? So impossible is it for a man to turn sot, without making himself a blockhead too. I know this is not always the present effect of these courses, but at long run it will infallibly be so; and time and luxury together will as certainly change the inside, as it does the outside of the best heads whatsoever; and much more of such heads as are strong for nothing but to bear drink: concerning which, it ever was, and is, and will be a sure observation, that such as are ablest at the barrel, are generally weakest at the book. And thus much for the first great darkener of man's mind, sensuality; and that, in both the branches of it, lust and intemperance.

Secondly, Another vicious affection, which clouds and darkens the conscience, is covetousness; con-

cerning which it may truly be affirmed, that of all the vices incident to human nature, none so powerfully and peculiarly carries the soul downwards as covetousness does. It makes it all earth and dirt, burying that noble thing which can never die. So that, while the body is above ground, the soul is under it, and therefore must needs be in a state of darkness, while it converses in the regions of it.

How mightily this vice darkens and debases the mind, scripture instances do abundantly shew. When Moses would assign the proper qualifications of a judge, (which office certainly calls for the quickest apprehension and the solidest judgment that the mind of man is well capable of,) Deut. xvi. 19. *Thou shalt not*, says he, *take a gift*. But why? He presently adds the reason; *because a gift*, says he, *blinds the eyes of the wise*. And no wonder, for it perverts their will; and then, who so blind as the man who resolves not to see? gold, it seems, being but a very bad help and cure of the eyes in such cases. In like manner, when Samuel would set the credit of his integrity clear above all the aspersions of envy and calumny itself, 1 Sam. xii. 3. *Of whose hands*, says he, *have I received a bribe to blind my eyes therewith?* Implying thereby, that for a man to be gripe-handed and clear-sighted too was impossible. And again, Eccl. vii. 7. *A gift*, says the wise man, *destroyeth the heart;* that is, (as we have shewn already,) the judging and discerning powers of the soul. By all which we see, that in the judgment of some of the wisest and greatest men that ever lived, such as Moses, Samuel, Solomon himself, covetousness baffles and befools the mind, blinds and confounds the reasoning faculty; and that, not only in ordinary per-

sons, but even in the ablest, the wisest, and most sagacious. And to give you one proof, above all, of the peculiar blinding power of this vice, there is not the most covetous wretch breathing, who does so much as see or perceive that he is covetous.

For the truth is, preach to the conscience of a covetous person (if he may be said to have any) with the tongue of men and angels, and tell him of the vanity of the world, of treasure in heaven, and of the necessity of being *rich toward God*, and liberal to his poor brother; and it is all but flat, insipid, and ridiculous stuff to him, who neither sees, nor feels, nor suffers any thing to pass into his heart, but through his hands. You must preach to such an one of bargain and sale, profits and perquisites, principal and interest, use upon use; and if you can persuade him that godliness is gain in his own sense, perhaps you may do something with him: otherwise, though you edge every word you speak with reason and religion, evidence and demonstration, you shall never affect, nor touch, nor so much as reach his conscience; for it is kept sealed up in a bag under lock and key, and you cannot come at it.

And thus much for the second base affection that blinds the mind of man, which is covetousness: a thing directly contrary to the very spirit of Christianity, which is a free, a large, and an open spirit; a spirit open to God and man, and always carrying charity in one hand and generosity in the other.

Thirdly, The third and last vile affection which I shall mention, (as having the same darkening effect upon the mind or conscience,) is ambition. For as covetousness dulls the mind by pressing it down too much below itself, so ambition dazzles it by lifting

it up as much above itself; but both of them are sure to darken the light of it. For if you either look too intently down a deep precipice upon a thing at an extreme distance below you, or with the same earnestness fix your eye upon something at too great an height above you; in both cases you will find a vertigo or giddiness. And where there is a giddiness in the head, there will be always a mist before the eyes. And thus, no doubt, it was only an ambitious aspiring after high things, which not long since caused such a woful, scandalous giddiness in some men's consciences, and made them turn round and round from this to that, and from that to this, till at length they knew not what bottom to fix upon. And this, in my opinion, is a case that admits of no vindication.

Pride, we know, (which is always cousin-german to ambition,) is commonly reckoned the forerunner of a fall. It was the devil's sin and the devil's ruin, and has been ever since the devil's stratagem; who, like an expert wrestler, usually gives a man a lift before he gives him a throw. But how does he do this? Why; by first blinding him with ambition; and when a man either cannot or will not mind the ground he stands upon, as a thing, forsooth, too much below him, he is then easily justled down, and thrust headlong into the next ditch. The truth is, in this case men seem to ascend to an high station, just as they use to leap down a very great steep: in both cases they shut their eyes first; for in both the danger is very dreadful, and the way to venture upon it is not to see it.

Yea, so fatally does this towering, aspiring humour intoxicate and impose upon men's minds, that when

the devil stands bobbing and tantalizing their gaping hopes with some preferment in church or state, they shall do the basest, the vilest, and most odious things imaginable; and that not only in defiance of conscience, but, which is yet more impudent and intolerable, shall even allege conscience itself as the very reason for the doing them: so that such wretches shall out of mere conscience, forsooth, betray the country that bred, and the church that baptized them, and having first practised a dispensing power upon all law within them, shall help to let the same loose upon all laws without them too. And when they have done, shall wipe their mouths, and with as boon a grace and as bold a front look the world in the face, as if they expected thanks for such villainies as a modest malefactor would scarce presume to expect a pardon for.

But as for these ambitious animals, who could thus sell their credit and their conscience, wade through thick and thin, and break through all that is sacred and civil, only to make themselves high and great, I shall say no more of them but this, that, instead of being advanced to what they so much desired, it is well for them that they have not been advanced to what they so highly deserved. For this I am sure of, that neither Papists nor fanatics (both of them our mortal, implacable enemies) can conceive a prayer more fully and effectually for their own interest, than this, That the church of England may never want store of ambitious, time-serving men. And if God should, in his anger to this poor church and nation, grant them this, they doubt not but in a little time to grant, or rather give themselves the rest. Let this therefore be fixed upon as a certain

maxim, that ambition first blinds the conscience, and then leads the man whither it will, and that is, in the direct course of it, to the devil.

I know there are many more irregular and corrupt affections belonging to the mind of man, and all of them in their degree apt to darken and obscure the light of conscience. Such as are wrath and revenge, envy and malice, fear and despair, with many such others, even too many a great deal to be crowded into one hour's discourse. But the three forementioned (which we have been treating of) are, doubtless, the most predominant, the most potent in their influence, and most pernicious in their effect: as answering to those three principal objects which, of all others, do the most absolutely command and dómineer over the desires of men; to wit, the pleasures of the world working upon their sensuality; the profits of the world upon their covetousness; and lastly, the honours of it upon their ambition. Which three powerful incentives, meeting with these three violent affections, are, as it were, the great trident in the tempter's hand, by which he strikes through the very hearts and souls of men; or as a mighty threefold cord, by which he first hampers, and then draws the whole world after him, and that with such a rapid swing, such an irresistible fascination upon the understandings, as well as appetites of men, that as God said heretofore, *Let there be light, and there was light;* so this proud rival of his Creator, and overturner of the creation, is still saying, in defiance of him, Let there be darkness, and accordingly there is darkness; darkness upon the mind and reason; darkness upon the judgment and conscience of all mankind. So that hell itself seems

to be nothing else, but the devil's finishing this his great work, and the consummation of that darkness in another world, which he had so fatally begun in this.

And now, to sum up briefly the foregoing particulars; you have heard of what vast and infinite moment it is, to have a clear, impartial, and right-judging conscience; such an one as a man may reckon himself safe in the directions of, as of a guide that will always tell him truth, and truth with authority: and that the eye of conscience may be always thus quick and lively, let constant use be sure to keep it constantly open; and thereby ready and prepared to admit and let in those heavenly beams, which are always streaming forth from God upon minds fitted to receive them.

And to this purpose, let a man fly from every thing which may leave either a foulness or a bias upon it; for the first will blacken, and the other will distort it, and both be sure to darken it. Particularly let him dread every gross act of sin; for one great stab may as certainly and speedily destroy life as forty lesser wounds. Let him also carry a jealous eye over every growing habit of sin; for custom is an overmatch to nature, and seldom conquered by grace; and, above all, let him keep aloof from all commerce or fellowship with any vicious and base affection; especially from all sensuality, which is not only the dirt, but the black dirt, which the devil throws upon the souls of men; accordingly let him keep himself untouched with the hellish, unhallowed heats of lust, and the noisome steams and exhalations of intemperance, which never fail to leave a brutish dulness and infatuation behind them. Like-

wise, let him bear himself above that sordid and low thing, that utter contradiction to all greatness of mind, covetousness; let him disenslave himself from the pelf of the world, from that *amor sceleratus habendi;* for all love has something of blindness attending it; but the love of money especially. And lastly, let him learn so to look upon the honours, the pomp, and greatness of the world, as to look through them too. Fools indeed are apt to be blown up by them, and to sacrifice all for them; sometimes venturing their very heads, only to get a feather in their caps. But wise men, instead of looking above them, choose rather to look about them and within them, and by so doing keep their eyes always in their heads; and maintain a noble clearness in one, and steadiness in the other. These, I say, are some of those ways and methods by which this great and internal light, the judging faculty of conscience, may be preserved in its native vigour and quickness. And to complete the foregoing directions by the addition of one word more; that we may the more surely prevent our affections from working too much upon our judgment, let us wisely beware of all such things as may work too strongly upon our affections.

If the light that is in thee be darkness, says our Saviour, *how great must that darkness needs be!* That is, how fatal, how destructive! And therefore I shall close up all with those other words of our Saviour, John xii. *While you have the light, walk in the light:* so that the way to have it, we see, is to walk in it; that is, by the actions of a pious, innocent, well governed life, to cherish, heighten, and improve it: for still, so much innocence, so much light: and on the other side, to abhor and loathe whatsoever

may any ways discourage and eclipse it; as every degree of vice assuredly will. And thus by continually feeding and trimming our lamps, we shall find that this blessed light within us will grow every day stronger and stronger, and flame out brighter and brighter, till at length, having led us through this vale of darkness and mortality, it shall bring us to those happy mansions, where there is light and life for evermore.

Which God, the great author of both, of his infinite mercy vouchsafe to us all; to whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

A SERMON

PREACHED AT WESTMINSTER ABBEY,

MAY 29, 1670.

MATTHEW v. 44.

But I say unto you, Love your enemies.

BEFORE we descend to the prosecution of the duty enjoined in these words, it is requisite that we consider the scheme and form of them as they stand in relation to the context. They are ushered in with the adversative particle *but*, which stands as a note of opposition to something going before: and that we have in the immediately preceding verse, *Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies.* Which way of speaking has given occasion to an inquiry, whether the duty here enjoined by Christ be opposed to the Mosaic law, or only to the doctrine of the scribes and Pharisees, and their corrupt glosses thereupon; some having made this and the next chapter, not only a fuller explication and vindication of the Mosaic law, but an addition of higher and perfecter rules of piety and morality to it.

For the better clearing of which point, I conceive that the matter of all the commandments (the fourth only, as it determines the time of God's solemn wor-

ship to the seventh day, excepted) is of natural moral right, and by consequence carries with it a necessary and eternal obligation; as rising from the unalterable relation that a rational creature bears either to God, his neighbour, or himself. For there are certain rules of deportment suggested by nature to each of these; which to deviate from, or not come up to, would be irrational, and consequently sinful. So that such duties can by no means owe their first obligation to any new precept given by Christ, but, springing from an earlier stock, obliged men in all ages and places, since the world began. Forasmuch as that general habitude or relation (upon which all particular instances of duty are founded) which men bore to God, their neighbour, and themselves, upon account of their being rational creatures, was universally and equally the same in all. So that for a man to hate his enemy, or to be revengeful, or to be angry without a cause, or to swear rashly, or by looks, words, or actions, to behave himself lasciviously, were, without question, always aberrations from the dictates of rightly improved reason; and consequently, in the very nature of the things themselves, unlawful. For if there were not a natural evil and immorality in the aforesaid acts, nor a goodness in the contrary, but that all this issued from a positive injunction of the one, and prohibition of the other; what reason can be assigned, but that God might have commanded the said acts, and made them duties, instead of forbidding them? which yet certainly would be a very strange, or rather monstrous assertion, but nevertheless, by a necessity of sequel, unavoidable. From whence I conceive it to be very clear, that if the several particulars commanded or

forbidden by Christ, in that his great sermon upon the mount, had a natural good or evil respectively belonging to them; Christ thereby added no new precept to the moral law, which eternally was and will be the same, as being the unalterable standard or measure of the behaviour of a rational creature in all its relations and capacities.

For we must not think, that when the law, either by precept or prohibition, takes notice only of the outward act, and the gospel afterwards directs itself to the thoughts and desires, the motives and causes of the said act; or again, when the law gives only a general precept, and the gospel assigns several particular instances reducible to the same general injunction, that therefore the gospel gives so many new precepts corrective or perfective of the aforesaid precepts of the law. No, by no means; for it is a rule which ever was and ever ought to be allowed in interpreting the divine precepts, that every such precept does virtually and implicitly, and by a parity of reason, contain in it more than it expressly declares; which is so true, that those persons, who impugn the perfection of the old moral precepts, and upon that account oppose the precepts of Christ to them, do yet find it necessary to maintain, that even the precepts of our Saviour himself ought to extend their obligation to many more particulars than are mentioned in them, and yet are not to be looked upon, as at all the less perfect upon that account. Which rule of interpreting being admitted, and made use of as to the precepts of the New Testament, why ought it not to take place in those of the Old also? And if it ought, (as there can be no shadow of reason to the contrary,) I dare undertake, that there will be no

need of multiplying of new precepts in the gospel, as often as the Papists and Socinians have a turn to serve by them. For surely every new instance of obedience does not of necessity infer a new precept; and for that reason we may and do admit of several of the former, without any need of asserting the latter. The unity of a precept is founded in the general unity of its object, and every such general comprehends many particulars. The very institution of the two Christian sacraments, is rather the assignation of two new instances of obedience than of two new precepts. For Christ having once authentically declared that God would be worshipped by those two solemn acts, the antecedent general precept of worshipping God according to his own will, was sufficient to oblige us to these two particular branches of it, being thus declared; and indeed to as many more as should from time to time be suggested to our practice. For otherwise, if the multiplication of new particular instances of duty should multiply precepts too, it would render them innumerable, which would be extremely absurd and ridiculous.

And now, all that has been here alleged by us against the necessity of holding any new precepts added to the old moral law, as it obliged all mankind, (whether notified to them by the light of nature only, or by revelation too,) I reckon may as truly be affirmed of the law of Moses also; (still supposing it a true and perfect transcript of the said moral law, as we have all the reason in the world to believe it was;) for were it otherwise, it would be hard to shew, what advantage it could be to the Jewish church to have that law delivered to them; but on the contrary, it must needs have been rather a snare

than a privilege or help to them, as naturally giving them occasion to look upon that as the most perfect draught of their duty, when yet it required of them a lower degree of obedience than nature had before obliged them to; it being a thing in itself most rational, to suppose the latter declaration of a legislator's mind to be still the fuller and more authentic. And therefore, if other duties had been incumbent upon the Jewish church by the law of nature, besides what were contained in the law of Moses; it is not imaginable how they could avoid the omission of those duties while they acquiesced in the directions of Moses as a full and sufficient rule of obedience, and had so much reason so to do. Which yet surely must have rendered the whole Mosaic dispensation by no means agreeable either to the wisdom or goodness of God towards his chosen people.

For though indeed the moral law as a covenant promising life upon condition of absolute indefective obedience, be now of no use to justify, (sin having disabled it for that use through the incapacity of the subject,) yet as it is a rule directing our obedience, and a law binding to it, it still continues in full force, and will do as long as human nature endures. And as for the absolute perfection of it in the quality of a rule directing, and a law obliging, can that be more amply declared, and irrefragably proved, than as it stands stated and represented to us in the vast latitude of that injunction, Deut. vi. 5. and Levit. xix. 18. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself:* I say, is there any higher degree of

obedience which the nature of man is capable of yielding to his Maker than this?

Nevertheless there are some artists, I must confess, who can draw any thing out of any thing, who answer, that these words are not to be understood of absolutely all that a man can do; but of all that he can be engaged to do by the law as proposed under such an economy, namely, as enforced with temporal promises and threatenings; so that upon these terms, *to love God with all the heart*, &c. is to love him with the utmost of such an obedience, as laws, seconded with temporal blessings and curses, are able to produce. But to this I answer;

First, That the argument bears upon a supposition by no means to be admitted, to wit, that the law of Moses proceeded only upon temporal rewards and punishments: which is most false, and contrary to the constantly received doctrine of the Christian church; and particularly of the church of England, as it is declared in the sixth of her Articles. But,

Secondly, I add further, That the obliging power of the law is neither founded in, nor to be measured by, the rewards and punishments annexed to it; but by the sole authority of the lawgiver springing from the relation which he bears, of a creator and governor, to mankind, and consequently of the entire dependance of mankind upon him; by virtue whereof they owe him the utmost service that their nature renders them capable of doing him. And that, I am sure, is capable of serving him at an higher rate, than the consideration of any temporal rewards or punishments can raise it to; since oftentimes the bare love of virtue itself will carry a man further than these can: but however it is certain that eternal rewards

can do so; which yet add nothing to our natural powers of obeying, though they draw them forth to an higher pitch of obedience. And can we then imagine that God would sink his law below these powers, by leaving some degree of love and service to himself absolutely within the strength and power of man, which he did not think fit by the Mosaic law to oblige him to, (when yet our Saviour himself promised eternal life to one, upon supposal of his performance of this law,) Luke x. 28. This certainly is very strange divinity. But after all, some may possibly reply, Does not the gospel enjoin us that perfection and height of charity which the law never did, in commanding us *to lay down our life for our brother?* 1 John iii. 16.

To which I answer, That this is a precept by no means absolute and universal, but always to be limited by these two conditions, *viz.* first, that the glory of God, and, secondly, that the eternal welfare of the soul of our brother indispensably requires this of us; upon the supposal of either of which I affirm, it was as really a duty from the beginning of the world, as it was from that very time that the apostle wrote these words; the very common voice of reason upon these terms, and under these circumstances, dictating and enjoining no less, as founding itself upon these two selfevident and undeniable principles, *viz.* that the life of the creature ought, when necessity calls, to be sacrificed to the glory of him who gave it; and secondly, that we ought to prefer the eternal good of our neighbour or brother, before the highest temporal good of ourselves. Which manifestly shews, that this high instance of charity (as extraordinary as it appears) did

not at length begin to be a duty by any evangelical sanction, but was so ever since there was such creatures in the world as men, and consequently that all, both Jews and Gentiles, (whether they actually knew so much or no,) would have sinned against this duty of charity, should they have refused to promote the glory of their Maker, or prevent the destruction of their brother's immortal soul, being called thereto, by quitting this temporal life for the sake of either. And consequently that this is no such new precept to be reckoned by *anno Domini*, but as old as the obligations of charity and of right reason, discoursing and acting upon the dictates of that noble principle.

And now to apply this general discourse to the particulars mentioned in this chapter: I affirm, that Christ does by no means here set himself against the law of Moses, as a law either faulty or imperfect, and upon those accounts needing either correction or addition, but only opposed the corrupt comments of the scribes and Pharisees upon the law, as really contradictions to it, rather than expositions of it; and that for these following reasons:

First, Because the words in this sermon mentioned and opposed by Christ, are manifestly, for the most part, not the words of the law itself, but of the scribes and Pharisees. As for instance, *Whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment.* And again in the next verse, *He shall be in danger of the council.* They all refer to the Pharisees' way of expressing themselves; which manifestly shews, that it was their doctrine and words which he was now disputing against, and not the law itself; which this is by no means the language of.

Secondly, That expression, *That it was said by those* [a] *of old time*, was not uttered by Christ in his own person, but by way of prosopopœia, in the person of the scribes and Pharisees, whose custom it was to preface and authorize their lectures and glosses to the people with the pompous plea of antiquity and tradition. As if Christ had bespoken them thus: You have been accustomed indeed to hear the scribes and Pharisees tell you, that *this* and *this* was said by those of old time: but, notwithstanding all these pretences, I tell you that the case is much otherwise, and that the true account and sense of the law is *thus* and *thus*. This, I say, is the natural purport and meaning of our Saviour's words throughout this chapter.

Thirdly, That passage in the 43d verse of the same, *Ye have heard that it hath been said, Ye shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy*, is so far from being the words of the Mosaic law, that Moses commands the clean contrary to the latter clause, Exod. xxiii. 4, 5. *If thou seest thine enemy's ox going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again; and if thou seest the ass of him who hateth thee lying under his burden, thou shalt surely help him.* And if this was the voice of the law then, can we imagine that it would make it a man's duty to relieve his enemy's ox, or his ass, and at the same time allow him to hate or malign his person? This certainly is unaccountable and incredible.

Fourthly, If Christ opposed his precepts to those of the Mosaic law, then God speaking by Christ must contradict himself as speaking by Moses. For whatsoever Moses spoke, he spoke as the immediate

[a] Some render it [*to those.*]

dictates of God, from whom he received the law. But this is absurd, and by no means consistent with the divine holiness and veracity.

Fifthly and lastly, Christ in all this discourse never calls any one of the doctrines opposed by him the words of Moses, or of the law, but only the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, which shews that they, and they only, were the persons with whom he managed this whole contest.

Let this therefore rest with us as a firm conclusion; that Moses and Christ were at perfect agreement, whatever the controversy was between him and the Pharisees. And so from the scheme and context of the words, I pass to the duty enjoined in them, which is *to love our enemies;* the discussion of which I shall cast under these three general heads:

First, I shall shew negatively what is not that love, which we are here commanded to shew our enemies.

Secondly, I shall shew positively wherein it does consist.

Thirdly, I shall produce arguments to enforce it.

And first, for the first of these; what is not that love, which we must shew our enemies: this we shall find to exclude several things which would fain wear this name.

1. As, first, to treat an enemy with a fair deportment and amicable language, is not the love here enjoined by Christ. Love is a thing that scorns to dwell any where but in the heart. The tongue is a thing made for words; but what reality is there in a voice, what substance in a sound? and words are no more. The kindness of the heart never kills, but that of the tongue often does. And in an ill sense a soft answer

may sometimes break the bones. He who speaks me well, proves himself a rhetorician or a courtier; but that is not to be a friend.

Was ever the hungry fed or the naked clothed with good looks or fair speeches? These are but thin garments to keep out the cold, and but a slender repast to conjure down the rage of a craving appetite. My enemy perhaps is ready to starve or perish through poverty, and I tell him I am heartily glad to see him, and should be very ready to serve him, but still my hand is close, and my purse shut; I neither bring him to my table, nor lodge him under my roof; he asks for bread, and I give him a compliment, a thing indeed not so hard as a stone, but altogether as dry. I treat him with art and outside: and lastly, at parting, with all the ceremonies of dearness, I shake him by the hand, but put nothing into it. In a word, I play with his distress, and dally with that which will not be dallied with, want and misery, and a clamorous necessity.

For will fair words and a courtly behaviour pay debts and discharge scores? If they could, there is a sort of men that would not be so much in debt as they are. Can a man look and speak himself out of his creditor's hands? Surely then, if my words cannot do this for myself, neither can they do it for my enemy. And therefore this has nothing of the love spoken of in the text. It is but a scene, and a mere mockery, for the receiving that, cannot make my enemy at all the richer, the giving of which makes me not one penny the poorer. It is indeed the fashion of the world thus to amuse men with empty caresses, and to feast them with words and air, looks and legs; nay, and it has this peculiar privilege above all other fashions,

that it never alters: but certainly no man ever yet quenched his thirst with looking upon a golden cup, nor made a meal with the outside of a lordly dish.

But we are not to rest here; fair speeches and looks are not only very insignificant as to the real effects of love, but are for the most part the instruments of hatred in the execution of the greatest mischiefs. Few men are to be ruined till they are made confident of the contrary: and this cannot be done by threats and roughness, and owning the mischief that a man designs; but the pitfall must be covered, to invite the man to venture over it; all things must be sweetened with professions of love, friendly looks, and embraces. For it is oil that whets the razor, and the smoothest edge is still the sharpest: they are the complacencies of an enemy that kill, the closest hugs that stifle, and love must be pretended before malice can be effectually practised. In a word, he must get into his heart with fair speeches and promises, before he can come at it with his dagger. For surely no man fishes with a bare hook, or thinks that the net itself can be any enticement to the bird.

But now, if these outward shews of fairness are short of the love which we owe to our enemies; what can we say of those who have not arrived so far as these, and yet pretend to be friends? Disdain and distance, sour looks and sharp words, are all the expressions of friendship that some natures can manifest. I confess, where real kindnesses are done, these circumstantial garnitures of love (as I may so call them) may be dispensed with; and it is better to have a rough friend than a fawning enemy: but those who neither do good turns nor give good

looks, nor speak good words, have a love strangely subtile and metaphysical: for other poor mortals of an ordinary capacity are forced to be ignorant of that which they can neither see, hear, feel, nor understand. And thus much for the first negative. The love that we are to shew to enemies is not a fair external courtly deportment; it is not such a thing as may be learnt in a dancingschool, nor in those shops of fallacy and dissimulation, the courts and palaces of great men, where men's thoughts and words stand at an infinite distance, and their tongues and minds hold no correspondence or intercourse with one another.

2. Fair promises are not the love that our Saviour here commands us to shew our enemies. And yet these are one step and advance above the former: for many fair speeches may be given, many courteous harangues uttered, and yet no promise made. And it is worth observing how some great ones often delude, and simple ones suffer themselves to be deluded, by general discourses and expressions of courtesy. As, "Take you no care, I will provide "for you. I will never see you want. Leave your "business in my hands, and I will manage it with "as much or more concern than you could yourself. "What need you insist so much upon this or that in "particular? I design better things for you." But all this while there is no particular determinate thing promised, so as to hold such an one by any real, solid engagement, (supposing that his promise were such,) but perhaps, when the next advantage comes in the way, the man is forgot and balked: yet still those general speeches hold as true as ever they did, and so will continue, notwithstanding all

particular defeats; as indeed being never calculated for any thing else but to keep up the expectation of easy persons; to feed them for the present, and to fail them in the issue.

But now, as these empty glossing words are short of promises, so promises are equally short of performances. Concerning both which I shall say this, that there is no wise man, but had rather have had one promise than a thousand fair words, and one performance than ten thousand promises. For what trouble is it to promise, what charge is it to spend a little breath, for a man to give one his word, who never intends to give him any thing else? And yet, according to the measures of the world, this must sometimes pass for an high piece of love; and many poor unexperienced believing souls, who have more honesty than wit, think themselves wrapped up into the third heaven, and actually possessed of some notable preferment, when they can say, "I have such a "great person's promise for such or such a thing." Have they so? Let them see if such a promise will pay rent, buy land, and maintain them like gentlemen. It is at the best but a future contingent; for either the man may die, or his interest may fail, or his mind may change, or ten thousand accidents may intervene. Promises are a diet which none ever yet thrived by, and a man may feed upon them heartily, and never break his fast. In a word, I may say of human promises, what expositors say of divine prophecies, "that they are never understood "till they come to be fulfilled."

But how speaks the scripture of these matters? Why, in Rom. xii. 20. *If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink.* It is not, Promise

him meat and drink a week hence, that is perhaps two days after he is dead with thirst and hunger. He who lives only upon reversions, and maintains himself with hope, and has nothing to cover him but the clothes of dead men, and the promises of the living, will find just as much relief from them, as a man in the depth of winter feels the heat of the following summer.

But bare promises are so far from answering Christ's precept of loving our enemies, that if they are not realized in deeds, they become a plague and a great calamity. For they raise an expectation, which, unsatisfied or defeated, is the greatest of torments; they betray a man to a fallacious dependance, which bereaves him of the succours of his other endeavours, and in the issue leaves him to inherit the shame and misery of a disappointment, and unable to say any thing else for himself, but that he was credulous, and the promiser false.

3. But thirdly and lastly, to advance a degree yet higher, to do one or two kind offices for an enemy, is not to fulfil the precept of loving him. He who clothes a naked man with a pair of gloves, and administers to one perishing with thirst a drop or two of water, reaches not the measure of his necessity, but, instead of relieving, only upbraids his want, and passes a jest upon his condition. It is like pardoning a man the debt of a penny, and in the mean time suing him fiercely for a talent. Love is then only of reality and value when it deals forth benefits in a full proportion to one's need; and when it shews itself both in universality and constancy. Otherwise it is only a trick to serve a turn and carry on a design.

For he who would take a cleanly, unsuspected way to ruin his adversary, must pave the way to his destruction with some courtesies of a lighter sort, the sense of which shall take him off from his guard, his wariness, and suspicion, and so lay him open to such a blow as shall destroy him at once. The skilful rider strokes and pleases the unruly horse, only that he may come so near him, as to get the bit into his mouth, and then he rides, and rules, and domineers over him at his pleasure. So he who hates his enemy with a cunning equal to his malice, will not strain to do this or that good turn for him, so long as it does not thwart, but rather promote the main design of his utter subversion. For all this is but like the helping a man over the stile, who is going to be hanged, which surely is no very great or difficult piece of civility.

In the reign of queen Elizabeth, we read of one whom the grandees of the court procured to be made secretary of state, only to break his back in the business of the queen of Scots, whose death they were then projecting: like true courtiers, they first engage him in that fatal scene, and then desert him in it, using him only as a tool to do a present state job, and then to be reproached and ruined for what he had done. And a little observation of the world may shew us, that there is not only a course of beheading, or hanging, but also of preferring men out of the way. But this is not to love an enemy, but to hate him more artificially. He is ruined more speciously indeed, but not less efficaciously, than if he had been laid fast in a dungeon, or banished his country, or by a packed jury despatched into another world.

2. And thus having done with the negative, I come now to the second general thing proposed; namely, to shew positively what is included in the duty of loving our enemies.

It includes these three things.

1. A discharging the mind of all rancour and virulence towards an adversary. The scripture most significantly calls it the *leaven of malice*, and we know that is of a spreading and fermenting nature, and will in time diffuse a sourness upon a man's whole behaviour: but we will suppose (which is yet seldom found) that a man has such an absolute empire and command over his heart, as for ever to stifle his disgusts, and to manage his actions in a constant contradiction to his affections, and to maintain a friendly converse, while he is hot with the rancour of an enemy; yet all this is but the mystery of dissimulation, and to act a part, instead of acting a friend.

Besides the trouble and anxiety to the very person who thus behaves himself. For enmity is a restless thing, and not to be dissembled without some torment to the mind that entertains it. It is more easily removed than covered. It is as if a man should endeavour to keep the sparks from flying out of a furnace, or as if a birth should be stopped when it is ripe and ready for delivery, which surely would be a pain greater than that of bringing forth.

He who is resolved to hate his enemy, and yet resolves not to shew it, has turned the edge of his hatred inwards, and becomes a tyrant and an enemy to himself: he could not wish his mortal adversary a greater misery, than thus to carry a mind always

big and swelling, and ever ready to burst, and yet never to give it vent.

But on the other side, it is no pain for a man to appear what he is, and to declare a real principle of love in sensible demonstrations. Does a man therefore find that both his duty and his interest require, that he should deport himself with all signs of love to his enemies? let him but take this easy course, as to entertain the thing in his heart which he would manifest in his converse, and then he will find that his work is as natural and easy, as it is for fire to cast abroad a flame. Art is difficult, but whatsoever is natural is easy too.

2. To love an enemy is to do him all the real offices of kindness, that opportunity shall lay in our way. Love is of too substantial a nature to be made up of mere negatives, and withal too operative to terminate in bare desires. Does Providence cast any of my enemies' concernments under my power; as his health, his estate, preferment, or any thing conducing to the conveniences of his life? Why, in all this it gives me an opportunity to manifest, whether or no I can reach the sublimity of this precept of loving my enemies.

Is my enemy sick and languishing, and is it in my power to cure him as easily, or to kill him as safely, as if I were his physician? Christianity here commands me to be concerned for his weakness, to shew him a remedy, and to rescue him from the grave; and in a word, to preserve that life which perhaps would have once destroyed mine.

Do I see my enemy defrauded and circumvented, and like to be undone in his estate? I must not sit

still and see him ruined, and tell him I wish him well; which is a contradiction in practice, and an impudent, ill-natured sarcasm: but I must contribute my hearty assistance to discover the fraud, and to repel the force: and as readily keep him from being poor, as relieve him if he were. I must be as forward in the pursuit of the thief who stole his goods who once plundered mine, as if the injury had light upon my friend, my kinsman, or myself.

And lastly, does it lie in my way to put in a word to dash or promote my enemy's business or interest? to give him a secret blow, such a one as shall strike his interest to the ground for ever, and he never know the hand from whence it came? Can I, by my power obstruct his lawful advantage and preferments, and so reap the diabolical satisfaction of a close revenge? Can I do him all the mischief imaginable, and that easily, safely, and successfully; and so applaud myself in my power, my wit, and my subtile contrivances, for which the world shall court me as formidable and considerable? Yet all these wretched practices and accursed methods of growing great, and rising by the fall of an enemy, are to be detested, as infinitely opposite to that innocence and clearness of spirit, that openness and freedom from design, that becomes a professor of Christianity.

On the contrary, amidst all these opportunities of doing mischief, I must espouse my enemy's just cause, as his advocate or solicitor. I must help it forward by favourable speeches of his person, acknowledgment of his worth and merit, by a fair construction of doubtful passages: and all this, if need be, in secret, where my enemy neither sees nor hears me do

him these services, and consequently where I have all the advantages and temptations to do otherwise. In short, the gospel enjoins a greater love to our enemies, than men, for the most part, nowadays shew their friends.

3. The last and crowning instance of our love to our enemies is to pray for them. For by this a man, as it were, acknowledges himself unable to do enough for his enemy; and therefore he calls in the assistance of Heaven, and engages omnipotence to complete the kindness. He would fain outdo himself, and therefore, finding his own stores short and dry, he repairs to infinity. Prayer for a man's self is indeed a choice duty, yet it is but a kind of lawful and pious selfishness. For who would not solicit for his own happiness, and be importunate for his own concerns? But when I pray as heartily for my enemy as I do for my daily bread; when I strive with prayers and tears to make God his friend, who himself will not be mine; when I reckon his felicity amongst my own necessities; surely this is such a love as, in a literal sense, may be said to reach up to heaven. For nobody judges that a small and a trivial thing, for which he dares to pray: no man comes into the presence of a king to beg pins. And therefore, if a man did not look upon the good of his enemy, as a thing that nearly affected himself, he could not own it as a matter of a petition, and endeavour to concern God about that with which he will not concern himself. And upon the same ground also is inferred the necessity of a man's personal endeavouring the good and happiness of his enemy: for prayer without endeavour is but an affront to the throne of grace, and a lazy throwing that which is our own duty upon God.

As if a man should say, God forgive you, God relieve and comfort you, for I will not. But if to pray for an enemy be a duty, surely the manner in which we do it ought to be so too: and not such as shall turn a supplication for him into a satire against him, by representing him in our prayers under the character of one void of all grace and goodness, and consequently a much fitter object for God's vengeance than his mercy. And yet there was a time in which this way of praying was in no small vogue with a certain sort of men, who would allow neither the gift nor spirit of prayer to any but themselves. For if at any time they prayed for those whom they accounted their enemies, (and that only because they had done so much to make them so,) it could not be properly called an interceding with God for them, but a downright indicting and arraigning them before God, as a pack of graceless wretches and villains, and avowed enemies to the power and purity of the gospel. This and the like, I say, was the devout language of their prayers, sometimes by intimation, and sometimes by direct expression: and thus, under the colour and cover of some plausible artificial words, it was but for them to call those whom they maligned *Antichrist*, and themselves the *kingdom of Christ*, and then they might very laudably pray for the pulling down of the one, and the setting up of the other, and thereby no doubt answer all the measures of a sanctified, self-denying petition[a]. But as those days are at an end, so it were to be wished that such kind of praying were so too; especially since our church, I am sure, has so much charity, as

[a] See something upon the like subject, vol. i. p. 431.

to teach all of her communion to pray for those who are not only enemies to our persons, but also to our very prayers.

And thus I have endeavoured to shew what it is to *love our enemies;* though I will not say that I have recounted all the instances in which this duty may exert itself. For love is infinite, and the methods of its acting various and innumerable. But I suppose that I have marked out those generals which all particulars may be fairly reduced to.

And now, before I proceed to the motives and arguments to enforce the duty, I shall, to prevent some abuses of this doctrine, shew what is not inconsistent with this loving our enemies: and that is, to defend and secure ourselves against them. I am to love my enemy, but not so as to hate myself: if my love to him be a copy, I am sure the love to myself ought to be the original. Charity is indeed to diffuse itself abroad, but yet it may lawfully begin at home: for the precept surely is not unnatural and irrational; nor can it state the duty of Christians in opposition to the privileges of men, and command us tamely to surrender up our lives and estates as often as the hands of violence would wrest them from us. We may love our enemies, but we are not therefore to be fond of their enmity. And though I am commanded when my enemy *thirsts*, to *give him drink*, yet it is not when he thirsts for my blood. It is my duty to give him an alms, but not to let him take my estate. Princes and governors may very well secure themselves with laws and arms against implacable enemies, for all this precept: they are not bound to leave the state defenceless, against the projects, plots, and insurrections of those who are pleased to think them-

selves persecuted, if they are not permitted to reign. We may, with a very fair comportment with this precept, love our enemies' persons, while we hate their principles, and counterplot their designs.

I come now to the third and last thing, *viz.* to assign motives and arguments to enforce this love to our enemy; and they shall be taken,

1. From the condition of our enemy's person.
2. From the excellency of the duty.
3. From the great examples that recommend it.

And,

For the first of these, if we consider our enemy, we shall find that he sustains several capacities, which may give him a just claim to our charitable affection.

1. As, first, he is joined with us in the society and community of the same nature. He is a man; and so far bears the image and superscription of our heavenly Father. He may cease to be our friend, but he cannot cease to be our brother. For we all descended from the same loins, and though Esau hates Jacob, and Jacob supplants Esau, yet they once lay in the same womb: and therefore the saying of Moses may be extended to all men at variance; *Why do ye wrong one to another, for ye are brethren?* If my enemy were a snake or a viper, I could do no more than hate and trample upon him: but shall I hate the *seed of the woman* as much as I do that of the *serpent?* We hold that God loves the most sinful of his creatures so far as they are his creatures; and the very devils could not sin themselves out of an excellent nature, though out of an happy condition.

Even war, which is the rage of mankind, and observes no laws but its own, yet offers quarter to an

enemy; I suppose, because enmity does not obliterate humanity, nor wholly cancel the sympathies of nature. For every man does, or, I am sure, he may see something of himself in his enemy, and a transcript of those perfections for which he values himself.

And therefore those inhuman butcheries which some men have acted upon others, stand upon record, not only as the crimes of persons, but also as the reproach of our very nature, and excusable upon no other colour or account whatsoever, but that the persons who acted such cruelties upon other men first ceased to be men themselves; and were indeed to be reckoned as so many anomalies and exceptions from mankind; persons of another make or mould from the rest of the sons of Adam, and deriving their original, not from the *dust*, but rather from the *stones of the earth*.

2. An enemy, notwithstanding his enmity, may be yet the proper object of our love, because it sometimes so falls out, that he is of the same religion with us, and the very business and design of religion is to unite, and to put, as it were, a spiritual cognation and kindred between souls. I am sure this is the great purpose of the Christian religion; which never joins men to Christ but by first joining them amongst themselves: and making them *members one of another*, as well as knitting them all to the *same head*. By how much the more intolerable were our late zealots, in their pretences to a more refined strain of purity and converse with God, while in the mean time their hearts could serve them to plunder, worry, and undo their poor brethren, only for their loyal adherence to their sovereign; se-

questering and casting whole families out of their houses and livings, to starve abroad in the wide world, against all the laws of God and man; and who to this day breathe the same rage towards all dissenters from them, should they once more get the reforming sword into their hands. What these men's religion may teach them, I know not, but I am sure it is so far from teaching them to love their enemies, that they found their bitterest enmities and most inveterate hatreds only upon religion; which has taught them first to call their malice zeal, and then to think it their duty to be malicious and implacable.

3. An enemy may be the proper object of our love, because, though perhaps he is not capable of being changed, and made a friend by it, (which, for any thing I know, is next to impossible,) yet he is capable of being shamed, and rendered inexcusable. And shame may smooth over his behaviour, though no kindness can change his disposition: upon which account it is, that, so far as a man shames his enemy, so far he also disarms him. For he leaves him stripped of the assistance and good opinion of the world round about him; without which, it is impossible for any man living to be considerable, either in his friendships or his enmities.

Love is the *fire* that must both heap and kindle *those coals upon our enemy's head*, that shall either melt or consume him. For that man I account as good as consumed and ruined, whom all people, even upon the common concern of mankind, abhor for his ingratitude, as a pest and a public enemy. So that if my enemy is resolved to treat me spitefully, notwithstanding all my endeavours to befriend

and oblige him; and if he will still revile and rail at me, after I have employed both tongue and hand to serve and promote him, surely I shall by this means at least make his virulent words recoil upon his bold face and his foul mouth; and so turn that stream of public hatred and detestation justly upon himself, which he was endeavouring to bring upon me. And if I do no more, it is yet worth while, even upon a temporal account, to obey this precept of Christ, of *loving my enemy*. And thus much for the first general argument to enforce this duty, grounded upon the condition of my enemy's person.

2. A second motive or argument to the same shall be taken from the excellency of the duty itself. It is the highest perfection that human nature can reach unto. It is an imitation of the divine goodness, which shines upon the heads, and rains upon the fields of the sinful and unjust; and heaps blessings upon those who are busy only to heap up wrath to themselves. To *love an enemy* is to stretch humanity as far as it will go. It is an heroic action, and such an one as grows not upon an ordinary plebeian spirit.

The excellency of the duty is sufficiently proclaimed by the difficulty of its practice. For how hard is it, when the passions are high, and the sense of an injury quick, and power ready, for a man to deny himself in that luscious morsel of revenge! to do violence to himself, instead of doing it to his enemy! and to command down the strongest principles and the greatest heats, that usually act the soul when it exerts itself upon such objects.

And the difficulty of such a behaviour is no less declared by its being so rarely and seldom observed

in men. For whom almost can we see, who opens his arms to his enemies, or puts any other bounds to his hatred of him but satiety or disability; either because it is even glutted with having done so much against him already, or wants power to do more? Indeed where such a pitch of love is found, it appears glorious and glistering in the eyes of all, and much admired and commended it is; but yet for the most part no otherwise than as we see men admiring and commending some rare piece of art, which they never intend to imitate, nor so much as to attempt an imitation of. Nothing certainly but an excellent disposition, improved by a mighty grace, can bear a man up to this perfection.

3. The third motive or argument shall be drawn from the great examples which recommend this duty to us. And first of all from that of our blessed Saviour, whose footsteps in the paths of love we may trace out and follow by his own blood. He gave his life for sinners; that is, for enemies, yea, and enemies with the highest aggravation; for nothing can make one man so much an enemy to another, as sin makes him an enemy to God.

I say unto you, Love your enemies, says Christ, that is, I emphatically, I who say it by my example as much as by my precept. For Christ *went about doing good*, Acts x. 38. Yea, and he did it still in a miracle. Every work that he did was equally beneficial and miraculous. And the place where he did such wonders of charity was Jerusalem, a city red with the blood of God's messengers, and paved with the skulls of prophets; a city, which he knew would shortly complete all its cruelty and impiety in his own murder, though he was the promised and

long expected Messias. And in the prologue to this murder, his violent attachment, when one of his enemies was wounded, he bestowed a miracle upon his cure: so tender was he of his mortal enemies. Like a lamb, that affords wherewithal both to feed and clothe its very butcher; nay, and while he was actually hanging upon the cross, he uttered a passionate prayer for the forgiveness of his murderers: so desirous was he, that though they had the sole acting, yet that he himself should have the whole feeling of their sin. In fine, now that he sits at the right hand of his Father, triumphant, and governing the world, from whence he could with much more ease confound his most daring enemies, than the most potent grandee can crush his meanest and most servile dependants; yet he treats them with all the methods of patience and arts of reconcilement, and in a word, endures with much long-suffering those vessels of wrath, who seem even resolved to perish, and obstinately set to fit themselves for destruction.

And now, though, after such an example, this sort of argument for the *loving our enemies* can be carried no higher, yet, blessed be God, that is not so wholly exhausted by any one example, but that it may be carried further; and that by several instances, which, though they do by no means come up to a just comparison with it, yet ought to be owned for noble imitations of it. And such an one this happy day affords us, a day consecrated to the solemn commemoration of the nativity and return of a prince, who having been most barbarously driven out of his kingdoms, and afterwards as miraculously restored to them, brought with him the greatest, the brightest, and most stupendous instance of this virtue,

that, next to what has been observed of our Saviour himself, was ever yet shewn by man; providence seeming to have raised up this prince, as it had done his father before him, to give the world a glorious demonstration, that the most injured of men might be the most merciful of men too. For after the highest of wrongs and contumelies that a sovereign could suffer from his subjects; scorning all revenge, as more below him than the very persons whom he might have been revenged upon, he gloried in nothing so much as in giving mercy the upper hand of majesty itself, making amnesty his symbol or motto, and forgiveness the peculiar signalizing character of his reign; herein resembling the Almighty himself, (as far as mortality can,) who seems to claim a greater glory for sparing and redeeming man, than for creating him. So that, in a word, as our Saviour has made *love to our enemies* one of the chiefest badges of our religion, so our king has almost made it the very mark of our allegiance.

Thus even to a prodigy merciful has he shewn himself; merciful by inclination, and merciful by extraction; merciful in his example, and merciful in his laws, and thereby expressing the utmost dutifulness of a son, as well as the highest magnanimity and clemency of a prince; while he is still making that good upon the throne which the royal martyr his father had enjoined upon the scaffold; where he died pardoning and praying for those whose malice he was then falling a victim to: and this with a charity so unparalleled, and a devotion so fervent, that the voice of his prayers, it is to be hoped, drowned the very cry of his blood. But I love not to dwell upon such tragedies, save only to illustrate the height

of one contrary by the height of another; and therefore, as an humble follower of the princely pattern here set before us, I shall draw a veil of silence over all; especially since it surpasses the power of words sufficiently to set forth, either the greatness of the crimes forgiven, or of the mercy that forgave them.

But to draw to a close: we have here had the highest and the hardest duty perhaps belonging to a Christian, both recommended to our judgment by argument, and to our practice by example; and what remains, but that we submit our judgment to the one, and govern our practice by the other? And for that purpose, that we beg of God an assistance equal to the difficulty of the duty enjoined; for certainly it is not an ordinary measure of grace that can conquer the opposition that flesh and blood, and corrupt reason itself, after all its convictions, will be sure to make to it. The greatest miseries that befall us in this world are from enemies; and so long as men naturally desire to be happy, it will be naturally as hard to them to love those who they know are the grand obstacles to their being so. The light of nature will convince a man of many duties which it will never enable him to perform. And if we should look no further than bare nature, this seems to be one cut out rather for our admiration than our practice. It being not more difficult (where grace does not interpose) *to cut off a right hand*, than to reach it heartily to the relief of an inveterate implacable adversary. And yet God expects this from us, and that so peremptorily, that he has made the pardon of our enemies the indispensable condition of our own. And therefore that wretch, (whosoever he was,) who, being pressed hard upon his deathbed to

pardon a notable enemy which he had, answered, "That if he died indeed, he pardoned him; but if he "lived, he would be revenged on him:" that wretch, I say, and every other such image of the devil, no doubt, went out of the world so, that he had better never have come into it. In fine, after we have said the utmost upon this subject that we can, I believe we shall find this the result of all, that he is an happy man who has no enemies, and he a much happier who has never so many, and can pardon them.

God preserve us from the one, or enable us to do the other. To whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

False Foundations removed, and true ones laid for such wise Builders as design to build for Eternity:

IN

A SERMON

PREACHED AT ST. MARY'S IN OXFORD,

BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY,

DECEMBER 10, 1661.

MATTHEW vii. 26, 27.

And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

IT seems to have been all along the prime art and method of the great enemy of souls, not being able to root the sense of religion out of men's hearts, yet by his sophistries and delusions to defeat the design of it upon their lives; and, either by empty notions or false persuasions, to take them off from the main business of religion, which is duty and obedience, by bribing the conscience to rest satisfied with something less. A project extremely suitable to the corrupt nature of man; whose chief, or rather sole quarrel to religion, is the severity of its precepts, and the difficulty of their practice. So that, although it is as na-

tural for him to desire to be happy as to breathe, yet he had rather lose and miss of happiness, than seek it in the way of holiness. Upon which account, nothing speaks so full and home to the very inmost desires of his soul, as those doctrines and opinions, which would persuade him, that it may and shall be well with him hereafter, without any necessity of his living well here. Which great mystery of iniquity being carefully managed by the utmost skill of the tempter, and greedily embraced by a man's own treacherous affections, lies at the bottom of all false religions, and eats out the very heart and vitals of the true. For in the strength of this, some hope to be saved by believing well; some by meaning well; some by paying well; and some by shedding a few insipid tears, and uttering a few hard words against those sins which they have no other controversy with, but that they were so unkind as to leave the sinner before he was willing to leave them. For all this men can well enough submit to, as not forcing them to abandon any one of their beloved lusts. And therefore they will not think themselves hardly dealt with, though you require faith of them, if you will but dispense with good works. They will abound, and even overflow with good intentions, if you will allow them in quite contrary actions. And you shall not want for sacrifice, if that may compound for obedience; nor lastly, will they grudge to find money, if somebody else will find merit. But to live well, and to do well, are things of too hard a digestion.

Accordingly our Saviour, who well knew all these false hopes and fallacious reasonings of the heart of man, (which is never so subtile as when it would de-

ceive itself,) tells his hearers, that all these little trifling inventions will avail them nothing, and that in the business of religion, and the great concern of souls, all that is short of obedience and a good life, is nothing but trick and evasion, froth and folly; and consequently, that if they build upon such deceitful grounds, and with such slight materials, they must and can expect no other, than, after all their cost and pains, to have their house fall upon their heads, and so perish in the ruin. And with this terrible application in these two last verses, which I have pitched upon for my text, he concludes his divine sermon and discourse from the mount.

The words of the text being too plain and easy to need any nice or large explication, I shall manage the discussion of them in these four particulars.

First, In shewing the reasons upon which I conclude practice or obedience, in the great business of a man's eternal happiness, to be the best and surest foundation for him to build upon.

Secondly, In shewing the false foundations upon which many build, and accordingly in time of trial miscarry.

Thirdly, In shewing the causes why such miscarry and fall away in time of trial or temptation.

Fourthly and lastly, In shewing wherein the fatal greatness of their fall consists.

And first, for the first of these, *viz.* to shew the reasons why practice or obedience is the best and surest foundation (still supposing it bottomed upon the merits of Christ) for a man to build his designs for heaven and the hopes of his salvation upon, I shall mention three.

First, Because, according to the ordinary way

and economy of God's working upon the hearts of men, nothing but practice can change our corrupt nature; and practice continued and persevered in, by the grace of God, will. We all acknowledge, (that is, all who are not wise above the articles of our Church,) that there is an universal stain and depravation upon man's nature, that does incapacitate him for the fruition and infinitely pure converse of God. The removal of which cannot be effected but by introducing the contrary habit of holiness, which shall by degrees expel and purge out the other. And the only way to produce an habit, is by the frequent repetition of congenial actions. Every pious action leaves a certain tincture or disposition upon the soul, which being seconded by actions of the same nature, whether by the superaddition of new degrees, or a more radicate fixation of the same, grows at length into an habit or quality, of the force and energy of a second nature.

I confess, the habit of holiness, finding no principle of production in a nature wholly corrupt, must needs be produced by supernatural infusion, and consequently proceed, not from acquisition, but gift. It must be brought into the soul, it cannot grow or spring out of it. But then we must remember that most excellent and true rule of the schools, that *habitus infusi obtinentur per modum acquisitorum.* It is indeed a supernatural effect, but, as I may so speak, wrought in a natural way. The Spirit of God imitating the course of nature, even then when it works something above it.

A person in the state of nature, or unregeneracy, cannot, by the sole strength of his most improved performances, acquire an habit of true grace or holi-

ness. But, as in the rain, it is not the bare water that fructifies, but a secret spirit or nitre descending with it, and joined to it, that has this virtue, and produces this effect; so in the duties of a mere natural man, there is sometimes an hidden, divine influence, that keeps pace with those actions, and, together with each performance, imprints a holy disposition upon the soul; which, after a long series of the like actions, influenced by the same divine principle, comes at length to be of that force and firmness as to outgrow and work out the contrary qualities of inherent corruption.

We have an illustration of this, though not a parallel instance, in natural actions, which by frequency imprint an habit or permanent facility of acting, upon the agent. Godliness is in some sense an art or mystery, and we all know that it is practice chiefly that makes the artist.

Secondly, A second reason for our assertion is, because action is the highest perfection and drawing forth of the utmost power, vigour, and activity of man's nature. God is pleased to vouchsafe the best that he can give, only to the best that we can do. And action is undoubtedly our best, because the most difficult; for in such cases, worth and difficulty are inseparable companions. The properest and most raised conception that we have of God is, that he is a pure act, a perpetual, incessant motion. And next to him, in the rank of beings, are the angels, as approaching nearest to him in this perfection; being all flame and agility, ministering spirits, always busy and upon the wing, for the execution of his great commands about the government of the world. And indeed doing is nothing else but the noblest

improvement of being. It is not (as some nice speculators make it) an airy, diminutive entity, or accident, distinct from the substance of the soul; but, to define it more suitably to itself, and to the soul too, action is properly the soul in its best posture.

Thirdly, A third reason is, because the main end, drift, and design of religion is the active part of it. Profession is only the badge of a Christian, belief the beginning, but practice is the nature, and custom the perfection. For it is this which translates Christianity from a bare notion into a real business; from useless speculations into substantial duties; and from an idea in the brain into an existence in the life. An upright conversation is the bringing of the general theorems of religion into the particular instances of solid experience; and if it were not for this, religion would exist nowhere but in the Bible. The grand deciding question at the last day will be, not, What have you said? or, What have you believed? but, What have you done more than others?

But that the very life of religion consists in practice, will appear yet further from those subordinate ends to which it is designed in this world, and which are as really, though not as principally, the purpose of it, as the utmost attainment of the beatific vision, and the very last period of our salvation; and these are two.

First, The honouring of God before the world. God will not have his worship, like his nature, invisible. Next to authority itself, is the pomp and manifestation of it; and to be acknowledged is something more than to be obeyed. For what is sovereignty unknown, or majesty unobserved? What glory were it for the sun to direct the affairs, if he

did not also attract the eyes of the world? It is his open and universal light, more than his occult influence, that we love and admire him for. Religion, if confined to the heart, is not so much entertained, as imprisoned: that indeed is to be its fountain, but not its channel. The water arises in one place, but it streams in another; and fountains would not be so much valued, if they did not produce rivers.

One great end of religion is to proclaim and publish God's sovereignty; and there is no such way to cause men to *glorify our heavenly Father*, as by *causing our light to shine before them;* which I am sure it cannot do, but as it beams through our good works. When a man leads a pious and good life, every hour he lives is virtually an act of worship. But if inward grace is not exerted and drawn forth into outward practice, men have no inspection into our hearts, to discern it there. And let this be fixed upon as a standing principle, that it is not possible for us to honour God before men, but only by those acts of worship that are observable by men. It is our faith indeed that recognises him for our God, but it is our obedience only that declares him to be our Lord.

Secondly, The other end of religion in this world is, the good and mutual advantage of mankind in the way of society. And herein did the admirable wisdom and goodness of God appear, that he was pleased to calculate and contrive such an instrument to govern, as might also benefit the world. God planted religion amongst men as a *tree of life;* which, though it was to spring upwards directly to himself, yet it was to spread its branches to the benefit of all below.

There is hardly any necessity or convenience of mankind, but what is in a large measure served and provided for by this great blessing (as well as business) of the world, religion. And he who is a Christian, is not only a better man, but also a better neighbour, a better subject, and a truer friend, than he that is not so. For was ever any thing more for the good of mankind, than to forgive injuries, to love and caress our mortal adversaries, and, instead of our enemy, to hate only our revenge?

Of such a double yet benign aspect is Christianity both to God and man; like incense, while it ascends to heaven, it perfumes all about it; at the same time both instrumental to God's worship, and the worshipper's refreshment: as it holds up one hand in supplication, so it reaches forth the other in benefaction.

But now, if it be one great end of religion, thus to contribute to the support and benefit of society, surely it must needs consist in the active piety of our lives, not in empty thoughts and fruitless persuasions. For what can one man be the better for what another thinks or believes? When a poor man begs an alms of me, can I believe my bread into his mouth, or my money into his hand? Believing without doing is a very cheap and easy, but withal a very worthless way of being religious.

And thus having given the reasons, why the active part of religion is the only sure bottom for us to build upon, I now proceed to the second thing proposed, namely, to shew those false and sandy foundations which many venture to build upon, and are accordingly deceived by; which though they are exceedingly various, and according to the

multiplicity of men's tempers, businesses, and occasions, almost infinite, and like the sand mentioned in my text, not only infirm, but numberless also, yet, according to the best of my poor judgment and observation, I shall reduce them to these three heads. The

First of which is a naked, unoperative faith. Ask but some upon what grounds they look to be saved, and they will answer, "Because they firmly believe "that through the merits of Christ their sins are "forgiven them." But since it is hard for a man in his right wits to be confident of a thing which he does not at all know; such as are more cautious will tell you further, "That to desire to believe is to "believe, and to desire to repent is to repent." But as this is absurd and impossible, since no act can be its own object without being not itself; forasmuch as the act and the object are distinct things; and consequently a desire to believe can no more be belief, than a desire to be saved can be salvation; so it is further intolerable upon this account, that it quite dispirits religion, by placing it in languid, abortive velleities, and so cuts the nerves of all endeavour, by rating glory at a bare desire, and eternity at a wish.

But because the poison of this opinion does so easily enter, and so strangely intoxicate, I shall presume to give an antidote against it in this one observation, namely, that all along the scripture, where justification is ascribed to faith alone, there the word *faith* is still used by a metonymy of the antecedent for the consequent, and does not signify abstractedly a mere persuasion, but the obedience of an holy life performed in the strength and virtue of such a per-

suasion. Not that this justifies meritoriously by any inherent worth or value in itself, but instrumentally as a condition appointed by God, upon the performance of which, he freely imputes to us Christ's righteousness, which is the sole, proper, and formal cause of our justification. So that that instrumentality, which some in the business of justification attribute to one single act of credence, is by this ascribed to the whole aggregate series of gospel obedience, as being that which gives us a title to a perfect righteousness without us, by which alone we stand justified before God. And this seems with full accord both to scripture and reason to state the business of justification by an equal poise both against the arrogant assertions of self-justiciaries on the one hand, and the wild opinions of the Antinomians on the other.

But whether the obedience of a pious life, performed out of a belief or persuasion of the truth of the gospel, ought to pass for that faith which justifies, or only for the effect or consequent of it, yet certainly it is such an effect as issues by a kind of connatural, constant efficiency and result from it. So that how much soever they are distinguishable by their respective actions from one another, they are absolutely inseparable by a mutual and a necessary connection: it belonging no less to the faith which justifies to be operative, than to justify: indeed, upon an essential account, more; forasmuch as it is operative by its nature, but justifies only by institution.

Secondly, The second false ground which some build upon, is a fond reliance upon the goodness of their heart, and the honesty of their intention. A profitable, and therefore a very prevailing fallacy;

and such an one as the devil seldom uses, but with success; it being one of his old and long experimented fetches, by the pretences of a good heart, to supplant the necessity of a good life. But to allege the honesty of the mind against the charge of an evil course, is a protestation against the fact, which does not excuse, but enhance its guilt. As it would look like a very strange and odd commendation of a tree, to apologise for the sourness of its fruit, by pleading that all its goodness lay in the root.

But in the discourses of reason, such is the weakness and shortness of its reach, that it seldom suggests arguments *a priori* for any thing, but by a low and humble gradation creeps from the effects up to the cause, because these first strike and alarm the senses; and therefore St. James speaks as good philosophy as divinity, when he says, James ii. 18, *Shew me thy faith by thy works.* Every action being the most lively portraiture and impartial expression of its efficient principle, as the complexion is the best comment upon the constitution: for in natural productions there is no hypocrisy.

Only we must observe here, that good and evil actions bear a very different relation to their respective principles. As it is between truth and falsehood in argumentation, so it is between good and evil in matters of practice. For though from an artificial contrivance of false principles or premises may emerge a true conclusion, yet from true premises cannot ensue a false: so, though an evil heart may frame itself to the doing of an action in its kind or nature good, yet a renewed, sanctified principle cannot of itself design actions really vicious. The reason of which is, because the former in such a case acts upon a

principle of dissimulation; and no man by dissembling affects to appear worse than he is, but better. But all this while, I speak not of a single action, but of a conversation or course of acting: for a pious man may do an evil action upon temptation or surprise, but not by the tenor of his standing principles and resolutions. But when a man's sin is his business and the formed purpose of his life; and his piety shrinks only into meaning and intention; when he tells me his heart is right with God, while his hand is in my pocket, he upbraids my reason, and outfaces the common principles of natural discourse with an impudence equal to the absurdity.

This therefore I affirm, that he who places his Christianity only in his heart, and his religion in his meaning, has fairly secured himself against a discovery in case he should have none; but yet, for all that, shall at the last find his portion with those who indeed have none. And the truth is, those who are thus intentionally pious, do in a very ill and untoward sense verify that philosophical maxim, that what they so much pretend to be chief and first in their intention, is always last, if at all, in the execution.

Thirdly, The third and last false ground that I shall mention, upon which some men build to their confusion, is party and singularity. If an implicit faith be, as some say, the property of a Roman Catholic, then I am sure popery may be found where the name of papist is abhorred. For what account can some give of their religion, or of that assurance of their salvation, (which they so much boast of,) but that they have wholly resigned themselves up to the guidance and dictates of those who have the

front and boldness to usurp the title of the godly. To be of such a party, of such a name, nay, of such a sneaking look, is to some the very spirit and characteristic mark of Christianity.

See what St. Paul himself built upon before his conversion to Christ, Acts xxvi. 5. *I was*, says he, *after the strictest sect of our religion a Pharisee.* So that it was the reputation of the sect upon which St. Paul then embarked his salvation. Now the nature of this fraternity or sect we may learn from the origination of their name *Pharisee;* it being derived from פרש *parasch, separavit, discrevit,* whence in Greek they were called ἀφωρισμένοι [a], *separati.* So that the words amount to this, that St. Paul, before he was *a Christian*, was a rigid *separatist.*

But singularity is not sincerity, though too often and mischievously mistaken for it; and as an house built upon the sand is likely to be ruined by storms, so an house built out of the road is exposed to the invasion of robbers, and wants both the convenience and assistance of society: Christ is not therefore called the *corner stone in the spiritual building*, as if he intended that his church should consist only of corners, or be driven into them. There is a by-path, as well as a broad-way, to destruction. And it both argues the nature, and portends the doom of chaff, upon agitation to separate and divide from the wheat. But to such as venture their eternal interest upon such a bottom, I shall only suggest these two words.

First, That admitting, but not granting, that the

[a] Φαρισαῖοι οἱ ἑρμηνευόμενοι ἀφωρισμένοι, παρὰ τὸ μερίζειν καὶ ἀφορίζειν ἑαυτοὺς τῶν ἄλλων ἁπάντων. *Suidas.* Again, Φαρισαῖος ἀφωρισμένος, μεμερισμένος, καθαρός. *Hesych.* So that the Pharisees properly were, and might be called the Jewish Cathari, or Puritans.

party which they adhere to may be truly pious, yet the piety of the party cannot sanctify its proselytes. A church may be properly called holy, when yet that holiness does not diffuse itself to each particular member: the reason of which is, because the whole may receive denomination from a quality inherent only in some of its parts. Company may occasion, but it cannot transfuse holiness.

No man's righteousness but Christ's alone can be imputed to another. To rate a man by the nature of his companions, is a rule frequent indeed, but not infallible. Judas was as much a wretch amongst the apostles, as amongst the priests: and therefore it is but a poor argument for a man to derive his saintship from the virtues of the society he belongs to, and to conclude himself no *weed*, only because he grows amongst the *corn*.

Secondly, Such an adhesion to a party carries in it a strong suspicion and tang of the rankest of all ill qualities, spiritual pride. There are two things natural almost to all men:

First, A desire of preeminence in any perfection, but especially religious. Secondly, A spirit of opposition or contradiction to such as are not of their own mind or way. Now both these are eminently gratified by a man's listing himself of a party in religion. And I doubt not but some are more really proud of the affected sordidness of a pretended mortification, than others are of the greatest affluence and splendour of life: and that many who call the execution of law and justice persecution, do yet suffer it with an higher and more pleasing relish of pride than others can inflict it. For it is not true zeal rising from an hearty concernment for religion,

but an ill, restless, cross humour, which is provoked with smart, and quickened with opposition. The godly party is little better than a contradiction in the adjunct; for he who is truly godly, is humble and peaceable, and will neither make nor be of a party, according to the common sense of that word. Let such pretenders therefore suspect the sandiness and hollowness of their foundation; and know, that such imitators of Corah, Dathan, and Abiram, build upon the same ground upon which they stood, and into which they sunk. And certainly that man's condition is very unsafe, who accounts his sin his perfection, and so makes the object of his repentance the ground of his salvation.

And thus I have discovered some of those false and deceiving grounds upon which many bottom their eternal state, and by which they think themselves in the direct way to life and happiness, while, God knows, they are in the high and broad road to perdition.

Pass we now to the third thing proposed, which is, to shew whence it is that such ill-founded structures are upon trial sure to fall. For the demonstration of which we must observe, that to the violent dissolution of any thing two things concur: first, an assault or impression from without; secondly, an inherent weakness within. One is the active, the other the passive principle of every change. For so much as there is of weakness, there is of nonresistance, and so far as any thing yields or not resists, the contrary impression enters, and by degrees weakens, and at length destroys the subsistence of the thing opposed.

As for the first of these, the force and opposition

from without: it comes from the ὁ πονηρὸς the true *common enemy*, the implacable, insatiable devourer of souls, the devil; who will be sure to plant his engines of battery against every spiritual building which does but look towards heaven. The opposition he makes, our Saviour here emphatically describes by the *winds blowing*, the *rain descending*, and the *floods coming*, which is not an insignificant rhetorication of the same thing by several expressions, (like some pulpit bombast, made only to measure an hour-glass,) but an exact description of those three methods by which this assault of the devil prevails and becomes victorious.

First, The first is, that it is sudden and unexpected. The devil usually comes upon the soul as he fell from heaven, like lightning. And he shews no small art and policy by his so doing: for quickness prevents preparation, and so enervates opposition. It is observed of Cæsar, that he did *plurima et maxima bella sola celeritate conficere:* so that almost in all his expeditions he seldom came to any place, but his coming was before the report of it. And we shall find, that the Roman eagles owed most of their great conquests as much to their swiftness as to their force. And the same is here the devil's method in his warfare against souls. Upon which account also the same character that Tully gave the forementioned Cæsar in his Epistles to Atticus, may much more fitly agree to him, that he is *monstrum horribile celeritatis et vigilantiæ.* He flies to his prey, he fetches his blow quick and sure; he can shoot a temptation in a glance, and convey the poison of his suggestions quicker than the agitation of thought, or

the strictures of fancy. It is the sudden trip in wrestling that fetches a man to the ground.

Thus St. Peter, that giant in faith, was shamefully foiled by a sudden though weak assault. While he sits in the high priest's hall, warming himself and thinking nothing, one confounds him with this quick unexpected charge, Matth. xxvi. 69, *Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee.* The surprise of the onset prevented his deliberating powers from rallying together those succours of habitual grace, which, being alarmed by a more gradual approach of the temptation, would have easily repulsed it. But the devil will never caution the soul into a posture of defence by presenting the temptation at a distance. He bites and shews his teeth at the same instant; and so prevents the foresight of the eye, by exceeding it in quickness.

Secondly, His assaults are furious and impetuous. Temptations come very often, as the devil himself is said to do, in a storm. And a gust of wind, as it rises on a sudden, so it rushes with vehemence. And if the similitude does not yet speak high enough; to the violence of a storm, the text adds the prevailing rage of a flood. And we know the tyranny of this element when it once embodies into a torrent, and runs with the united force of many waters; it scorns all confinement, and tears down the proudest opposition, as Virgil fully describes it:

" —— rapidus montano flumine torrens
" Sternit agros, sternit sata læta, boumque labores,
" Præcipitesque trahit silvas—— "

With a parallel encounter does the devil draw upon the poor fortifications of outward civility, good

desires, imperfect resolutions, and the like, which are no more able to abide the shock of such batteries, than a morning dew is able to bear the scorching fury of the sun; or than such little banks as children use to raise in sport, are able to stem or stand against the outrageous breaking in of the sea. Every temptation has this property of water, either to insinuate or to force its way.

Thirdly, The devil in his assaults is restless and importunate. The wind is here said not only to blow, but emphatically to beat upon the house. And as in a tempest the blasts are both sudden and violent in their onset, so they are frequent in their returns. Importunity is the only coaction that the will knows. Where the devil cannot persuade, he will, if he can, even weary into a consent. It is often charging that wins the field. The tempter, if he is repulsed in a battle, will lengthen his assault into a siege. For the mind may have often a sudden heat of valour to repel the one, and yet not constancy to endure the other. A rejected proposal shall be reinforced with continual fresh supplies of more urgent and repeated persuasions.

See him thrice renewing the combat with our Saviour; and indeed after he has had the impudence to begin a temptation, it is always his prudence to pursue it. Otherwise, opposition only attempted, serves not for conquest, but admonition. His assaults are here said to come like the rain, and the rain never falls in one single drop; and yet if it did, even a drop would hollow and dig its way by frequency and assiduity.

It is observed by the learned Verulam, what advantage bold and importunate men have over others,

nay, even so as to prevail upon men of wisdom and resolution, because, as he excellently notes, " the " wisest men have their weak times :" and then I infer, that he who is importunate at all times, must needs catch them at those.

So when the tempter continues his importunity and siege about a soul, he has all these advantages over it: as, to view its strong holds, and to spy where they are least fortified; to observe the intervals and cessations of duty; when devotion ebbs, and the spiritual guards draw off; when the affections revel, and slide into a posture of security; and then to renew and bring on the assault afresh, and so to force a victorious entrance for his temptations.

It is here, as with the Greeks before Troy; it was not their armies, nor their Achilles, but their ten years' siege that got the conquest. What a violent flame cannot presently melt down, a constant, though a gentle heat will at length exhale. It is our known duty to fight and *resist the devil;* and we shall find that scarce any temptation ever encounters the soul without its second.

So then, you see here the first cause of this great overthrow, namely, the assault and impression made from without by the tempter; which in the next place is rendered effectual by the impotence and nonresistance of the soul that is so opposed; which peculiarly answers his threefold opposition with three contrary qualifications.

First, As first, that it is frequently unprepared. The soul, God knows, is but seldom upon the watch; its spiritual armour is seldom buckled on. The business, the cares, and the pleasures of the world, draw it off from its own defence: business employs, care

distracts, and pleasure lulls it asleep. And is this a posture to receive an enemy in? an enemy cunning, watchful, and malicious? an enemy who never sleeps, nor loiters, nor overlooks an advantage?

Secondly, As it is unprepared, so it is also weak and feeble. *The spirit*, says our Saviour, *is willing, but the flesh is weak.* And such is the condition of man in this world, that much more of flesh than spirit goes to his constitution. Nay, is not grace itself described under the weakness of *smoking flax*, or *a bruised reed?* Of which how quickly is one extinguished, and how easily is the other broke!

Thirdly, As it is both unprepared and weak, so it is also inconstant. Peter will die for his Master at one time, and not many hours after deny and forswear him. Steadfastness is the result of strength, and how then can constancy dwell with weakness? The greatest strength of the mind is in its resolutions, and yet how often do they change! Even in the weightiest concerns men too frequently put them on and off with their clothes. They deceive when they are most trusted: suddenly starting and flying in pieces like a broken bow; and, like a bow again, even when strongest they can hardly be kept always bent. We see what fair and promising beginnings some made, Luke viii. 13. *They heard the word, they received it with joy, but having not root, they believed only for a while, and so in time of temptation fell away.*

Constancy is the crowning virtue. Matth. x. 22. *He who endureth to the end shall be saved.* But then constancy and perseverance are the gift of God, and above the production of mere nature; it being

no small paradox to imagine, that where the stock itself is slight and infirm, any thing which grows out of it should be strong.

And thus having shewn the threefold impotence of the soul, answerable to the threefold opposition made against it by the devil, what can we conclude, but that where unpreparedness is encountered with unexpected force, weakness with violence, inconstancy with importunity, there destruction must needs be, not the effect of chance, but nature, and, by the closest connection of causes, unavoidable?

It now remains that in the last place we shew wherein the greatness of this fall consists. *The house fell, and great was the fall thereof.* In short, it may appear upon these two accounts.

First, That it is scandalous, and diffuses a contagion to others, and a blot upon religion. A falling house is a bad neighbour. It is the property of evil as well as of good to be communicative. We still suppose the building here mentioned in the text to have had all the advantages of visible representment, all the pomp and flourish of external ornament, a stately superstructure, and a beautiful appearance; and therefore such an one must needs perish as remarkably as it stood. That which is seen afar off while it stands, is heard of much further when it falls.

An eminent professor is the concern of a whole profession; as to nonplus an Aristotle would look, not only like a slur to a particular philosopher, but like a baffle to philosophy itself.

The devil will let a man build and practise high, that he may at length fetch him down with the greater shame, and so make even a Christian an argument against Christianity. The subduing of any

soul is a conquest, but of such an one a triumph. A signal professor cannot perish without a train, and in his very destruction his example is authentic.

Secondly, The greatness of the fall here spoken of appears also in this, that such an one is hardly and very rarely recovered. He whose house falls, has not usually either riches or heart to build another. It is the business of a life once to build.

God indeed can cement the ruins, and heal the breaches of an apostate soul, but usually a ship-wrecked faith and a defloured conscience admit of no repair. Like the present time, which when once gone never returns.

What may be within the compass of omnipotence, the secret of a decree, or the unlimited strains of extraordinary grace, is not here disputed: but, as it would be arrogance for us men to define the power of grace, so it is the height of spiritual prudence to observe its methods. And upon such observation we shall find, that the recovery of such apostates is not the custom, but the prerogative of mercy.

A man is ruined but once. A miscarriage in the new birth is dangerous; and very fatal it generally proves to pass the critical seasons of a defeated conversion.

And thus I have at length despatched what I at first proposed. Now the words themselves being, as I said before, Christ's application of his own sermon, cannot be improved into a better, and consequently need not into another, except what their own natural consequence does suggest; and that is, what our Saviour himself intimates elsewhere, namely, that he who is about to build, would first sit down and consider what it is like to cost

him. For building is chargeable, especially if a man lays out his money like a fool. Would a man build for eternity, that is, in other words, would he be saved? let him consider with himself, what charges he is willing to be at, that he may be so. Nothing under an universal, sincere obedience to all the precepts of the gospel can entitle him to the benefits of it; and thus far and deep he must go, if he will lay his foundation true. It is an hard and a rocky work, I confess, but the difficulty of laying it will be abundantly recompensed by the firmness of it when it is laid.

But it is a sad and mortifying consideration to think upon what false and sinking grounds, or rather upon what whirlpools and quicksands, many venture to build. Some you shall have amusing their consciences with a set of fantastical new-coined phrases, such as *laying hold on Christ, getting into Christ,* and *rolling themselves upon Christ,* and the like; by which, if they mean any thing else but obeying the precepts of Christ, and a rational hope of salvation thereupon, (which it is certain that generally they do not mean,) it is all but a jargon of empty, senseless metaphors; and though many venture their souls upon them, despising good works and strict living, as mere morality, and perhaps as popery, yet being throughly looked into and examined, after all their noise, they are really nothing but words and wind.

Another flatters himself that he has lived in full assurance of his salvation for ten, or twenty, or perhaps thirty years; that is, in other words, the man has been ignorant and confident very long.

Aye, but says another, I am a great hearer and

lover of sermons, (especially of lectures;) and it is this which is the very delight of my righteous soul, and the main business of my life; and though indeed, according to the good old puritan custom, I use to walk and talk out the prayers before the church door, or without the choir, yet I am sure to be always in at sermon. Nay, I have so entirely devoted my whole time to the hearing of sermons, that, I must confess, I have hardly any left to practise them. And will not all this set me right for heaven? Yes, no doubt, if a man were to be pulled up to heaven by the ears; or the gospel would but reverse its rule, and declare, *that not the doers of the word, but the hearers only should be justified.*

But then in comes a fourth, and tells us, that he is a saint of yet an higher class, as having got far above all their mean, beggarly, steeple-house dispensations, by an happy exchange of them for the purer and more refined ordinances of the conventicle; where he is sure to meet with powerful teaching indeed, and to hear will-worship and superstition run down, and the priests of Baal paid off, and the follies and fopperies of their great idol the Common Prayer laid open with a witness, (not without some edifying flings at the king and court too, sometimes,) by all which his faith is now grown so strong, that he can no more doubt of his going to heaven, than that there is such a place as heaven to go to.

So that if the conscience of such an one should at any time offer to grumble at him, he would presently stop its mouth with this, "that he is of such an "one's congregation;" and then, "conscience say thy "worst:" or if the guilt of some old perjuries or extortions should begin to look stern upon him, why

then all those old scores shall be cleared off with a comfortable persuasion, "that such as he cannot "fall from grace," though it is shrewdly to be feared, that his only way of proving this must be, "that "there can be no losing or falling from that which "a man never had."

But ah! thou poor, blind, self-deluding, and deluded soul! are these the best evidences thou hast for heaven? these the grounds upon which thou hopest for salvation? Assure thyself that God will deal with thee upon very different terms.

For he absolutely enjoins thee to do whatsoever Christ has commanded; and to avoid whatsoever he has forbidden. And Christ has commanded thee to be *poor in spirit, and pure in heart;* to subdue thy unruly appetites, to curb thy lust, to restrain thy anger, and to suppress thy revenge. And if any thing proves an hinderance to thee in thy duty, though it be as dear to thee as *thy right eye, to pluck it out;* and as useful to thee as thy *right hand, to cut it off and cast it from thee.* He will have thee ready to endure persecutions, revilings, and all manner of slanders, not only patiently, but also cheerfully for the truth's sake. He calls upon thee to *love thine enemies, and to do good for evil: to bless those that curse thee, and to pray for those that despitefully use thee.* He commands thee in all things, strictly *to do as thou wouldest be done by;* and not to cheat, lie, or overreach thy neighbour, and then call it, "a fetching over the wicked, "the better to enable thee to relieve the godly." He will not allow thee to resist evil, and much less to resist thy governor. He commands thee to be charitable without vain-glory, and devout without

ostentation. In short, he requires thee to be meek and lowly, chaste and temperate, just and merciful; and, in a word, (so far as the poor measures of humanity will reach,) *perfect as thy heavenly Father is perfect.*

This is the sum of those divine sayings of our Saviour, which he himself refers to in my text, and which if a man hears and does, all the powers of hell shall never shake him. And nothing but a constant, impartial, universal practice of these will or can speak peace to thy conscience here, and stand between thee and the wrath of God hereafter. As for all other pretences, they are nothing but death and damnation dressed up in fair words and false shews; nothing but gins, and snares, and trapans for souls, contrived by the devil, and managed by such as the devil sets on work.

But I have done, and the result of all that I have said or can say, is, that every spiritual builder would be persuaded to translate his foundation from the sand to the rock: and not presume upon Christ as his Saviour, till by a full obedience to his laws he has owned him for his sovereign. And this is properly to believe in him: this is truly to build upon a rock; even that *rock of ages*, upon which every one that wears the name of Christ must by an inevitable dilemma either build or split.

Now to God, who is able to build us up in our most holy faith, to establish us here, and to save us hereafter, be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

A true State and Account of the Plea of a tender Conscience:

IN

A SERMON

PREACHED AT CHRIST-CHURCH IN OXFORD,

BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY,

IN MICHAELMAS TERM, 1672.

1 Cor. viii. 12.

But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.

I SHALL, by God's assistance, from these words debate the case of a weak, or (as some improperly enough call it) a tender conscience: and with what evidence I can, shew both what it is, and what privileges it may justly claim from this and such other places of scripture. One great one we have here set down, and that indeed so great, that it looks more like a prerogative than a privilege; namely, that to wound or sin against it, is no less a crime than to sin against Christ himself.

Our apostle in two places of his Epistles treats professedly of this argument; to wit, in the 14th of the Romans, and in this 8th of the 1 Cor. For the

better understanding of his design and meaning in both which places, it will be requisite to give some brief account of the subject-matter and occasion of them. In the 14th chapter of the Romans he speaks of such as had been converted from Judaism to Christianity; some of which being but new converts, were not yet so perfectly and entirely Christians, but that they still observed the ordinances of the Mosaical law, as supposing it still in force. Others, on the contrary, being more confirmed and grown up in the knowledge of their Christian liberty, and thereby being fully satisfied that the ceremonial part of the Mosaic law was abolished and took away, observed not that difference of days and meats which was prescribed in that law, but looked upon one day as another, and indifferently ate any kind of meats, being persuaded in their conscience, that Christ had took away all such distinction, and made the use of all lawful. Nevertheless, the former sort of converts, not understanding that it was the design of Christianity to abrogate any thing once established by Moses, had their consciences still in bondage to a religious observation of whatsoever had been enjoined in his law. And thereupon, though they owned Christ, yet if any meat prohibited by Moses was set before them, they held themselves bound rather to fast, or to eat only herbs, than by eating such meat, to break the law, (as they thought,) and thereby to defile themselves. This was their case.

But in this 8th chapter of 1 Cor. St. Paul speaks of persons newly converted from idolatry, and that touching the lawfulness or unlawfulness of eating meats offered to idols. Concerning which offerings

we must know, that besides what was eaten of them in the idol's temple; (which eating was an act of religious worship and communion with the idol, as our eating the bread in the sacrament is a communion with Christ;) besides this, I say, there was a certain portion of those sacrifices which fell to the priests, and which they having no use of, sold to those who afterwards exposed it to sale promiscuously amongst other meat upon the shambles; from whence it was accordingly bought up, and spent in private families, without any distinction whether it had or had not been offered to idols. Now, as for the former way of eating meats thus offered, namely, in the idol's temple, this the apostle utterly disallows as absolutely unlawful; but the latter only under some circumstances. For he allows that it might be lawfully bought amongst other meat in the market, and being so bought, might be eaten in any private house without the least sin: only with this caution, that whereas there were some, who well understood that meat could have no defiling quality imprinted upon it by its consecration to an idol; and others, on the contrary, having not so much knowledge, supposed that the consecration of it to the idol left upon it such a polluting quality and near relation to the idol, as defiled the eater: the former sort might freely and innocently eat such meats in private families, provided it was not before those of the latter sort; who through weakness having an opinion of the unlawfulness of such meats, might nevertheless be induced to use the same liberty, though their consciences, in the mean time, having quite another judgment in this matter, esteemed the eating them little better than idolatry. Now the argument by

which the apostle abridges the liberty of the former sort of converts, in condescension to those of the latter sort, proceeds upon the strength of this assertion; that the lawfulness of men's actions depends not solely either upon the lawfulness of their subject-matter, nor yet upon the conscience of the doers of them considered in itself, but as considered with reference to the consciences of others, to whom by the law of charity they stand bound so to behave themselves, as by none of their actions to give them occasion of sin: and this was the case of the persons here treated of by the apostle in this chapter. Which historical account of the subject-matter of the words being thus premised, I shall cast the prosecution of them under these three heads:

1. I shall shew what a weak conscience is.

2. What it is to wound or sin against it.

3. I shall lay down some conclusions or assertions, naturally resulting from the foregoing particulars.

And first, for the first of these, what a weak conscience is. I said at first, that such a conscience was improperly called tender; which, in the sense it commonly bears, is an expression of our own framing, and nowhere to be met with in the scriptures; tenderness, applied to the conscience, properly imports quickness and exactness of sense, which is the perfection of this faculty, whose duty it is to be a spiritual watch, to give us warning of whatsoever concerns us. It is indeed the eye of the soul; and though the eye is naturally the most tender and delicate part of the body, yet it is not therefore called weak, so long as its sight is quick and strong. Conscience, the more sensible it is to accuse or excuse,

(which is its office,) and to spy out every little thing which may annoy or defile the soul, so much the more tender it is to be accounted, but not therefore so much the more weak; which sufficiently shews weakness and tenderness of conscience to be in strictness of speech two different things. And the same appears yet further from those contraries to which they stand respectively opposed. A tender conscience being opposed to a hard or seared conscience, such a one as either wholly or in a great measure has lost the distinguishing sense of good and evil, honest and dishonest. But a weak conscience is opposed to a strong; which very strength, we shew, consisted in the tenderness or quickness of its discerning or perceptive power; whereupon we read of strong men and babes in Christ; which denominations take their rise from the strength or weakness of the conscience: for such as the conscience is, such must be the Christian.

And here let none think my insisting upon the distinction of these terms either nice or needless: for it is no small artifice of fraud to prepossess the minds of men, by representing a bad thing under a good name, and calling weakness of conscience, which is a defect, by the name of tenderness, which is a perfection. Words govern the generality of the world, who seldom go so deep as to look into things: and impostors well know how likely their cause is to succeed, if their terms can but once be admitted.

As for the place now before us, it is evident that the weakness of conscience here spoken of is opposed to faith: so that in Rom. xiv. such an one is said to be *weak in the faith*, and verse 2, one [*be-*

lieveth] *that he may eat all things;* another, who is [*weak,*] *eateth herbs.* Where observe, that he *who believeth* is opposed to him who is *weak.* Now by *faith* here is not meant that act or quality by which a man is justified, but signifies the same with knowledge. As 1 Cor. viii. 10. *If any man see thee which hast* [*knowledge*] *sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to do so too?* And in ver. 7, *Howbeit there is not in every man that* [*knowledge:*] *for some with conscience of the idol eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being* [*weak*] *is defiled.* So that, as in that chapter to the Romans weakness of conscience is opposed to faith, here, in this chapter to the Corinthians, the same weakness is opposed to knowledge; which, from the identity of the case treated of in both places, together with other circumstances, evidently demonstrate faith and knowledge to be here taken for the same thing. In short therefore, the faith here spoken of is a clear knowledge of what is unlawful, and what only indifferent, together with a firm persuasion of the lawful use of such indifferent things, all circumstances being duly observed in the using of them. And therefore, on the other side, the weak conscience is such an one as judges otherwise of the nature of things than indeed it is, supposing that to be unlawful in itself which really is not so, and thereupon abstaining from the use of it, as of a thing unlawful.

From whence it follows, that weakness of conscience implies in it these three things:

First, An ignorance of the lawfulness of some certain thing or action.

Secondly, A suspicion ensuing thereupon of its unlawfulness.

Thirdly, A religious fear to use or practise it, grounded upon that ignorance or suspicion.

And first, for the first of these ingredients, ignorance; which is indeed the chief and principal of all the three, as being the original of the other two. Concerning this we must (as the groundwork of all) observe, that it ought by all means to be such an ignorance as may, in propriety of speech and sense, bear the denomination of weakness; which it is certain that every sort of ignorance neither does nor can. For since weakness is properly the privation or absence of power, that ignorance only can receive this name, which is not founded upon any vicious action or omission of the will. I say action or omission: for a man may either positively design and will the ignorance of a thing, by studiously avoiding all means to inform himself of it; much like the shutting of one's eyes against the light, or refusing to come to church: or it may be founded upon some omission; as when the will, though it does not designedly avoid and put from it the means of knowledge, yet neglects to look after them. Now the ignorance which is occasioned either of these ways is willing, and consequently sinful: though usually, for distinction sake, the former is with more emphasis termed, not only willing, but wilful; as being the direct object of an act of volition, and upon that account stamped with an higher aggravation.

That ignorance therefore that renders and denominates the conscience weak, must be such an one

as is not willing; which is evident upon a double account:

First, Because it must be such an one as renders it in some degree excusable; but, so far as any defect is resolved into the will, it is in that degree inexcusable.

Secondly, Because it must be such an ignorance as renders the person having it the object of pity and compassion. But no man pities another for any evil lying upon him which he would not help, but which he could not. One is his burden, the other his choice; virtually at least, since he might have chosen its prevention. So that it must be such an ignorance as is not (all circumstances considered) under the present power of a man's will to remedy. And consequently it must be resolved into one of these two causes:

First, The natural weakness of the understanding faculty.

Secondly, The want of opportunities or means of knowledge.

Either of which makes ignorance necessary; as it is impossible for him to see who wants eyes, and equally impossible for him who wants light; the former being the organ, the other the means of seeing. But as touching the natural weakness or disability of the understanding faculty, we must observe, that this may be either total, as in case of idiotism, phrensy, or the like, which wholly deprives a man of the use of his reason: but persons in this condition fall not under the present consideration. Or secondly, this disability of the understanding may be only in part, and as to a certain degree of its exercise. From whence it is, that one

man apprehends the same thing under the same advantages of proposal much more slowly and difficultly than another. Which defect being in no man's power to prevent, but coming with him into the world, all that ignorance which is inevitably caused by it, neither can nor ever shall be charged upon the will. But then withal, as this defect does not wholly deprive a man of the power of knowing, but only of the readiness, easiness, and quickness of it; (upon which account knowledge becomes more difficult to him in the acquisition;) so this weakness, dulness, or slowness of a man's intellectual powers, can never totally excuse him for being ignorant of what it was his duty to know; since it was in the power of his will by labour and industry to have supplied, and, as it were, to have pieced up these failures in his apprehension; and so at length to have acquired the knowledge of that by study and pains, which he could not by the slowness of his understanding take in at first.

But then this must be also confessed, that, by reason of this diversity in the quickness or slowness of men's understandings, one man may be sooner inexcusable for his ignorance of the same thing than another. For God will allow a man of slower parts to be ignorant of a thing longer than a person endued with more quick and pregnant sense. He expects from men only according to the proportions of his giving to them; still making an equality and commensuration between a man's obligations and his powers. And thus much for the first and grand ingredient of weakness of conscience, which is ignorance.

Secondly, The second is a suspicion of the unlaw-

fulness of any thing or action: and this is manifestly something more than a bare ignorance of its lawfulness. Though indeed such an ignorance is of itself enough to make the forbearance of any thing or action necessary: forasmuch as nothing ought to be done but in faith; that is, in a full persuasion of the lawfulness of what we do; which he can be no more said to do, who is ignorant of the lawfulness of what he goes about, than he who suspects it to be unlawful. Howbeit this suspicion adds to the guilt of the action, in case it be done during its continuance; because all suspicion is grounded upon some arguments, which leave not the opinion of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of a thing equal, as in case of mere ignorance, but rather incline us to a belief that it is unlawful. For it is one thing not to know whether a thing be lawful, another to doubt, and shrewdly to suspect that it is not so. Now this indeed is the usual concomitant of weakness of conscience, as being the natural product of ignorance, which seldom stops in itself: men in the dark being generally fearful, and apt to suspect the worst. But yet this suspicion is not essentially requisite to make a conscience weak; though where it is so, it makes that weakness greater, and more troublesome. For ignorance is properly that in which this weakness consists: ignorance makes the sore, suspicion inflames it.

Thirdly, The third and last thing that goes to the making up of this weakness of conscience, is a religious abstinence from the use of that thing, of the lawfulness whereof it is thus ignorant or suspicious. It brings a man to that condition in the 2d of Coloss. and the 21st verse, of *touch not, taste not,*

handle not. It lays a tie and a restraint upon his practice, and enslaves him to the prejudice of a mistaking conscience, under no less a penalty than that of the divine wrath and eternal damnation; bonds not to be shook off, and fences not to be broke through, by any one who values the eternal welfare of his soul.

Now from these three things put together, I conceive we may collect this full description of a weak conscience; namely, that it is such an one as obliges a man to forbear any thing or action, from a suspicion that it is unlawful, or at least an ignorance that it is lawful; which suspicion or ignorance was not caused or occasioned by his own will, but either by the natural weakness of his understanding, or the want of such means of knowledge as were absolutely necessary to inform him.

This description ought well to be observed and remembered in the several parts of it; as being that which must give light into all the following particulars.

And thus much for the first thing proposed, which was, to shew what this weak conscience is. I proceed now to the

Second, which is, to shew what it is to wound or sin against it. It implies, I conceive, these two things:

First, To grieve, afflict, or discompose it; or, in a word, to rob it of its peace. For there is that concernment for God's honour dwelling in every truly pious heart, which makes it troubled at the sight of any action by which it supposes God to be dishonoured. *Rivers of tears,* says David, *run down my eyes, because men keep not thy statutes;*

and am I not grieved with those who rise up against thee? Every sin directly strikes at God, but collaterally the scandal of it reaches all about us. And as piety commands us not to offend God, so charity enjoins us not to grieve our neighbour.

Secondly, The other thing implied in the wounding of a weak conscience, is, to encourage or embolden it to act something against its present judgment or persuasion: which is, in other terms, to offend, or cast a stumblingblock before it; that is, to do something which may administer to it an occasion of falling, or bringing itself under the guilt of sin. So that as the former was a breach upon the peace, this is properly a wound upon the purity of the conscience.

Now the conscience may be induced to act counter to its present persuasion two ways:

1st, By example. 2d, By command.

First. And first for example; which is the case here expressly mentioned, and principally intended. According to that of the apostle in the 10th verse of this 8th of 1 Cor. where he says, *that the conscience of him who is weak is emboldened to eat things offered unto idols, by seeing him who has knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple:* so that it is the seeing of another do so, which makes the weak person conclude that he may do so too. Now the reason of that persuasive force which is in example, is from a kind of implicit faith in the goodness and lawfulness of another's actings, grounded upon a supposal of his piety and judgment, which, in the weak conscience of one who beholds him, naturally frames such a kind of ratiocination as this: "I, for "my part, by the best of my understanding, can be

" no way satisfied of the lawfulness of my doing " such an action; nevertheless, such an one, whom I " esteem a person truly pious and more judicious " than myself, makes no scruple of doing it at all, " which surely he would, if it were indeed unlawful: " and therefore, if it be lawful for him to do thus " and thus, why may it not be so likewise for me, " albeit my own reason, I confess, would persuade " me otherwise?"

So that here is the force of example to persuade, and thereby, in this case, to wound; in that it induces a man to act by an implicit faith in the private judgment of another, against the express dictates and persuasions of his own; a thing directly against the law of God and nature, which has appointed every man's reason or conscience to be the immediate guide or governor of his actions.

Secondly. The second way by which the conscience may be induced to act contrary to its present persuasion, is by command; as when a person in power enjoins the doing something, of the lawfulness of which a man is not persuaded: but concerning this, these two things are to be observed:

First, That it is not so clear that a mere command can wound the conscience this way; that is, by emboldening it to act against its present persuasion: for so to embolden it, is to make it willing to act in this manner; but a command as such, makes not a man willing to do the thing commanded, but lays only an obligation upon the action that is to be done. Nevertheless, since a command seldom comes proposed naked in itself, but with the conjunction of reward upon performance of the thing commanded, or of penalties upon the omission; one whereof

works upon a man's hopes, the other upon his fears; by both of which ways the will of man is apt to be prevailed upon; therefore in this sense a command enjoining a man to do something against his judgment, may be said to wound his conscience: not as a bare command, (for so it has nothing to allure or gain the will, and it is certain that it cannot force it,) but as a command attended with those things which are apt to entice and gain upon it. Add to this also, that a command coming from a person noted for his piety and knowledge has the force of an example; forasmuch as the reputation of the person derives the same credit upon his law.

Secondly, The other thing here to be observed is, that a command may be considered two ways:

First, As descending from one private person upon another, as from a father upon a son, from a master upon his servant, from a guardian upon his pupil, or the like. And I question not but the principal design of the apostle in this chapter extends not beyond private persons; but directly proposes rules only for the charitable and inoffensive deportment of one private person towards another. Nevertheless, since by manifest analogy of reason the case of magistrates or public persons may here come into consideration; therefore, in the

Second place, a command may be considered as descending from a magistrate or public person upon persons under his jurisdiction. And so I affirm that the supreme magistrate, in the making of laws, or giving out commands, stands not under any obligation from his office to frame those laws to the good or advantage of any particular persons, but only of the community or majority of the people, which are

properly the trust committed to him. So that if his reason or conscience, upon the best information he can get, tells him that the making of such or such a law tends to the good of these, and that so apparently, that without it they would be unavoidably hurt in matters of the greatest moment; if this law now becomes an occasion of sin to some particular persons, its being so is wholly accidental and extrinsic to the design of the law, and consequently concerns not the civil magistrate, nor makes him chargeable with those sins in the least: for surely where the public good of all or most of the people comes into competition with the private good of some particulars, so that both cannot possibly be served by the same means, there charity, as well as bare reason, will teach, that the private must stoop to the public, rather than the public be made a sacrifice to the private. In God's government of the world, it is the public concern of mankind, that there should be summer and winter in their respective seasons, and yet there are millions of sick and weak persons to whose distempers the approach of either of those seasons will prove certainly mortal. Is it now, think we, rational, that God should suspend a summer or a winter only to comply with the distemper of those crazy, bodily-weak brethren, and thereby to incommode all the world besides?

The case is much alike here: however this indeed must be confessed, that if the magistrate or supreme power should make a law which he knew would be a direct occasion of sin to the generality or majority of his people, the making of such a law would be in him a sin, and a breach of his trust; but still I affirm, that his office obliges him only to provide for the

good of the main body of his people; and if it so falls out, that particulars come to have an interest distinct from, or opposite to that, he is not, during such its opposition, at all bound to regard or provide for it, nor to answer for the inconveniences which may attend such persons, either in their civil or spiritual concerns.

And thus much concerning the second thing proposed, which was to shew what it is to wound or sin against a weak conscience; namely, that it is either to grieve it, or to embolden it to sin. And if it be now objected against this, that the text calls a *sinning against a weak conscience, a sinning against Christ*, to whom we can no ways properly be said to administer any occasion or inducement to sin; I answer, that this expression of [*sinning against*] being applied to Christ, imports only a grieving or disobeying him: though, as it is applied to the weak conscience, it signifies the other thing too; it being not unusual in scripture for the same word to be repeated in the very same sentence under a diverse signification. Having thus finished the two first things, I come now to the

Third and last, which is to set down those conclusions which, by way of consequence and deduction, naturally result from the foregoing particulars. Which conclusions are these:

1. That no man having been brought up, or for any length of time continued in the communion of a church teaching and professing the true religion, if he have but also the common use of his reason, can justly plead weakness of conscience in the sense in which it was here used by the apostle.

2. That as such weakness of conscience can upon no sufficient ground be actually pleaded, so upon much less can it be continued in.

3. That supposing it might be both pleaded and continued in, yet the plea of it ought by no means to be admitted by the civil magistrate in prejudice of any laws either actually made or to be made by him for the general good of his people. Of each of which in their order.

First. And first, for the first of these, That no man, &c. This conclusion is of so much force and use, rightly applied, that it is a wonder it has not been more insisted upon against those who disturb the church with this plea, forasmuch as it would wholly cashier and pluck it up by the very roots. And men mistake the method of disputing with these pretenders to weak consciences nowadays; not considering that the very supposition that they either have or can have a weak conscience ought by no means to be granted them; nor are we to debate with them how far and to what degree this their weakness ought to be yielded to, but absolutely to deny, that amongst us, and under our circumstances, there is any such thing.

St. Paul indeed speaks of such a conscience in those first times of preaching the gospel, and accordingly urges a compliance with it; but where the cases are wholly different, there the privileges applicable to both cannot be the same. In both these places in which this apostle treats of this matter, I shew that the persons to whom he addresses himself were but new converts; some of which were just converted and come off from Judaism, whose reve-

rence to the law of Moses had been sucked in by them with their very milk, and been still kept up in the minds of all that people, to that strange height almost of adoration, that it is no wonder if their opinion of the continuance of that law even after Christ's death, and their ignorance of its abrogation, were for a time invincible. And for the other sort of new converts, they were such as had been converted from heathenism and idolatry, and consequently looked upon every thing in use amongst those heathens with a suspicion and a jealousy so strong, that, considering the weakness of human nature, it was impossible presently to remove it; and therefore they were in charity for some time to be complied with. For as the prejudices and prepossessions of education are exceeding hardly removed and broke, so being once broke, the aversions of the mind from them, running into the other extreme, are altogether as impetuous, and as hardly governable by impartial reason; whereupon shadows are oftentimes mistook for substances, whilst men, through immoderate fearfulness, first create to themselves appearances of evil, and then fly from them.

But what is all this to the case of those nowadays amongst us? who from their cradle have or might have had the principles of true religion instilled into them; who have still grown up in a church which protests against idolatry and superstition, and enjoins nothing that has any just appearance of such things upon it, but offers to vindicate every thing practised and enjoined by it from any such imputation: these men surely can have no reason to entertain those jealousies and prejudices which possessed men who had been bred up all their days in Judaism

or idolatry, and were but newly converted from it; especially if we add this also, that the goodness of God makes nothing our duty either to believe or practise, but what lies plain and obvious to any common apprehension which will not be wanting to itself. Which things, since the church inculcates to all within it, teaching them to know, by all the ordinary means of knowledge, whatsoever it is their duty to know; it is evident, that no man amongst us can justifiably plead weakness of conscience in that sense in which their consciences were weak, whom St. Paul deals with, either in that epistle of his to the Romans, or in this to the Corinthians. For can any man living in the church allege any tolerable cause why he should be ignorant of his Catechism, a thing so short and plain, and yet so full as to all things necessary to be believed or practised by a Christian, that common sense and common industry may make any one a master of it?

The sum of all therefore is this, that he only can plead weakness of conscience upon scripture grounds, who is excusably ignorant of some point of duty or privilege. He only is excusably ignorant, whose ignorance is not the effect of his will. That ignorance only is not so, which is caused either by want of ability, of understanding, or of opportunities and means of knowledge. But he who has the common use of reason has sufficient ability, and he who lives in a church professing the true religion has sufficient opportunity and means of knowing whatsoever concerns him either to know or do.

From a joint connexion and an unavoidable coherence of which propositions one with another, it clearly appears, that it is not weakness, but want of

conscience, which is the true distemper of those persons who at this day disturb the church.

Secondly. The second assertion or conclusion was this; That as such weakness of conscience can upon no sufficient ground be actually pleaded, so upon much less can it be continued in. This must needs be confessed by all, that a weak conscience, in the apostle's sense, is an imperfection, and consequently ought by all means to be removed or laid down. For as certainly as growth and proficiency in knowledge under the means of grace is a duty, so certainly is it a duty not to persist in this weakness of conscience, which has its foundation only in the defect of such knowledge. So that St. Paul himself, who is here willing that for the present it should be complied with, elsewhere upbraids and reprehends men sharply for continuing under it. As in the 1st of Cor. the 3d chap. and the 1st, 2d, and 3d verses, he calls such *babes*, and such as *were to be fed with milk, and not with meat.* And to shew yet further the imperfection of this estate, he says, that upon this account he could not treat them *as spiritual persons, but as carnal.* The same reprehension he repeats in Heb. v. where he again upbraids them with this appellation of *babes*, telling them, that *whereas for the time they ought to have been teachers of others, they continued in their spiritual childhood so long, that they had need that one taught them again which were the first principles of the oracles of God.* And to shew that these were such weak consciences as we are here discoursing of, in the 14th verse he opposes them to such as were *of full age, and that by reason of use had their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*

The want of which discernment is properly that thing wherein this weakness of conscience does consist. Whereupon the apostle in the next chapter calls upon *such to go on to perfection;* which surely implies, that this their present condition was not the perfection which they were to rest in.

And it were worth the while, in our contest with the pretenders to weak or tender consciences amongst us, to inquire of them how long they think it fit for them to continue weak? And whether they look upon their weakness and ignorance as their freehold, and as that which they resolve to keep for term of life, and to live and die babes in the knowledge of the religion they profess, to grow up into childhood, and at length go out of the world infants and weaklings of threescore or fourscore years old?

This certainly they must intend; for so far are they from looking upon that weakness or tenderness of conscience which they plead, as an imperfection, and consequently to be outgrown or removed by them, that they own it as a badge of a more refined and advanced piety, and of such a growth and attainment in the ways of God, that they look down upon all others as Christians of a lower form, as moral men, and ignorant of the mystery of the gospel: words which I have often heard from these impostors, and which infallibly shew, that the persons whom St. Paul dealt with, and those whom we contend with, are not the same kind of men; forasmuch as they own not the same duty. But that, it seems, which was the infancy and defect of those persons, must pass for the perfection, and really is the design of these. And whereas St. Paul said to the former,

that if they doubted they were damned if they eat, these (for ought appears) account it damnation not to doubt, where doubting of their duty may prove a serving of their interest.

I proceed now to the third and last conclusion, which is this: That supposing this weakness of conscience might be both pleaded and continued in, yet the plea of it ought by no means to be admitted by the civil magistrate in prejudice to any laws either actually made or to be made by him for the general good of his people. This was sufficiently manifest in what I laid down before; to wit, that the magistrate is no ways obliged to frame his laws to the good of any particular persons, where it stands separate from the good of the community or majority of the people: which consideration alone, though it be sufficient to discharge the magistrate from any obligation to admit of such pleas, yet there are other and more forcible reasons why they are by no means to be admitted. I shall assign two in general.

First. The first taken from the ill and fatal consequences which inevitably ensue upon their admission.

Secondly. The other taken from the qualification and temper of the persons who make these pleas.

As for the ill consequences springing from the admission of them, though according to the fertile nature of every absurd principle they are indeed innumerable, yet I shall insist only upon these three.

First. The first is, That there can be no bounds or limits put to this plea, nor any possibility of defining the just number of particulars to which it may extend. For it being founded in ignorance and

error, (as has been shewn,) it is evident, that it may reach to all those things of which men may be ignorant, and about which they may err: so that there is no duty, but men may doubt and scruple the doing of it, pretending that their consciences are not satisfied that it is a duty, or ought to be done. Nor is there any action almost so wicked and unjust, but they may pretend, that their consciences either prompt them to it as necessary, or allow them in it as lawful. As there was one, in the late blessed times of rebellion and reformation, who murdered his own mother for kneeling at the sacrament, alleging that it was idolatry, and that his conscience told him it was his duty to destroy idolaters. And let any man living, if he can, state exactly how far conscience will doubt, and be unsatisfied; and give me any reason, I say any solid reason, why, if it may plead dissatisfaction in this or that thing, it may not upon the same principle plead it in any other thing whatsoever. And so, if the obligation of our laws must then only begin when this plea shall end, I fear we shall never see either the end of one or the beginning of the other.

Secondly. The second ill consequence is this; that as there can be no bounding of this plea in respect of the particulars about which it may be made; so when it is made, there can be no possible evidence of the sincerity of it. For all the evidence producible must be the word of him who makes this plea; forasmuch as he only can be judge of his own thoughts and conscience, and tell whether they be really under such a persuasion and dissatisfaction, or no. But where men may pretend conscience in the behalf of interest, I see no reason why their word should be

taken in behalf of their conscience. And yet, if we hold to the principle upon which this plea relies, no other proof of it can be had; which if it be admitted, I suppose there needs no other argument to demonstrate, that this and the former consequence together are of that absurd nature and malign influence, that they must forthwith open the floodgates to all confusion, and like a mighty torrent bear down before them all law, right, justice, and whatsoever else the societies of mankind are settled by and supported with. But to proceed to yet a farther and more destructive consequence. In the

Third place, the admission of this plea absolutely binds the hands of the magistrate, and subjects him to the conscience of those whose duty it is to be subject to him. For let the civil power make what laws it will, if conscience shall come and put in its exception against them, it must be heard, and exempt the person who makes the exception from the binding power of those laws. For since conscience commands in the name of God, the issue of the question must be, whether God or the magistrate is to be obeyed, and then the decision is like to be very easy. This consequence is so direct, and withal so strong, that there is no bar against it. So that whereas heretofore the magistrate passed for God's vicegerent here on earth, the weak conscience is now resolved to keep that office for itself, and to prefer the magistrate to the dignity of being its under-officer: for the magistrate must make only such laws as such consciences will have made, and such laws only must be obeyed as these consciences shall judge fit to be obeyed. So that upon these terms, it is not the king, but the tender conscience that has got the

negative voice upon the making of all our laws, and which is more, upon the observing them too, when they are made.

I dare affirm, that it is as impossible for any government or politic body, without a standing force, to subsist or support itself in the allowance of this principle, as it is for the natural body to live and thrive with a dagger sticking in its vitals. Nor can any thing be fuller of contradiction and ridiculous paradox, than to think to reconcile the sovereignty of the magistrate, and the safety of government, with the sturdy pleas of dissenting consciences. It being all one, as if the sceptre should be put into the subject's hand, in order to his being governed by it.

I could add yet further, that, considering things and persons barely in themselves, it is ten to one but God rather speaks in the conscience of a lawful Christian magistrate making a law, than in the conscience of any private persons whatsoever dissenting from it.

And thus much for the first general reason against admitting the pleas of weak, or, as some falsely call them, tender consciences. The

Second general reason shall be taken from those qualities which usually accompany the said pleas; of which there are two:

First, Partiality. Secondly, Hypocrisy.

First. And first, for partiality. Few make this plea themselves, who, being once got into power, will endure it in others. Consult history for the practices of such in Germany, and your own memories for the practices of the late saints in England. In their general comprehensive toleration, you know, prelacy stood always joined with popery, and both

were excepted together. Nor was there any toleration allowed for the liturgy and established worship of the church of England, though the users of it pleaded conscience never so much for its use, and the known laws of God and man for the rule of that their conscience.

But those zealots were above that legal ordinance of *doing as they would be done by;* nor were their consciences any longer spiritually weak, when their interest was once grown temporally strong; and then, notwithstanding all their pleas of tenderness, and outcries against persecution, whoever came under them, and closed not with them, found them to be men whose bowels were brass, and whose hearts were as hard as their foreheads.

Secondly, The other qualification, which generally goes along with this plea, and so renders it not fit to be admitted, is hypocrisy. Divines generally agree upon this as a certain evidence of the sincerity of the heart, when it has an equal respect unto all God's commands, and makes duty, as duty, one of the principal reasons of its obedience; the consequence of which is, that its obedience must needs be universal. Now upon the same ground, if conscience be really, even in their own sense, tender, and doubts of the lawfulness of such or such a practice, because it carries in it some appearance and semblance of evil, though yet it dare not positively affirm that it is so; surely, it must and will be equally afraid of every other practice which carries in it the same appearance of evil; and utterly abhor and fly from those practices which the universal consent of all nations and religions condemns as evidently wicked and unjust.

But the tenderness we have to deal with is quite of another nature, being such an one as makes men scruple at the lawfulness of a set form of divine worship, at the use of some solemn rites and ceremonies in the service of God; but makes them not stick at all at sacrilege, which St. Paul equals to idolatry; nor at rebellion, which the prophet makes as bad as witchcraft; nor at the murder of their king, and the robbing and undoing their fellow-subjects; villainies, which not only Christianity proscribes, but the common reason of mankind rises up against, and by the very light of nature condemns. And did not those who plead tenderness of conscience amongst us do all these things? Nay, did they not do them in the very strength of this plea?

In a word, are the particulars alleged true, or are they not? If not, then let shame and confusion, and a just judgment from God light upon those who make such charges where they are not due. But if all which has been alleged be true, then, in the name of the God of truth, let not those pass for weak, and much less for tender consciences, which can digest such horrid, clamorous impieties. Nor let them abuse the world nor disturb the Church by a false cry of superstition, and a causeless separation from her thereupon; especially if they will but calmly and seriously consider, whose ends by all this they certainly serve, whose work they do, and whose wages they have so much cause to dread.

In fine, the result of the whole discourse is this: that since the weakness of conscience spoken of by St. Paul is grounded upon some ignorance, for the present excusable; and since none amongst us enjoying the means of knowledge daily held forth by

the Church, together with the common use of his reason, can be excusably ignorant of any thing which he is concerned to know; the plea of such weakness can have no place amongst us, much less can it be allowably continued in, and least of all can it be suffered to control the civil magistrate either in the making or the execution of laws, but ought wholly to be rejected, as well for its pernicious consequences, to wit, that it is boundless, and that the truth of it is no ways discoverable, and withal that it subjects the sovereign power to those who are to be subject to it and governed by it: as also for the partiality and cruelty of its pleaders, who deny that to others which they claim to themselves; together with their hypocrisy in stopping at molehills and leaping over mountains, in practising things notoriously unjust, while they stick at things indifferent, and at the most but doubtful.

From all which it follows, that how much soever such pretenders may beguile factious and unstable minds, deceiving others and being deceived themselves; and how much soever they may mock the powers of this world, yet God is not mocked, who searches the heart, and looks through the pretence, and will reward every man according to his work, whatsoever may be his profession.

To which God be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

Christianity mysterious, and the Wisdom of God in making it so:

PROVED IN

A SERMON

PREACHED AT WESTMINSTER ABBEY,

April 29, 1694.

1 Cor. ii. 7.

But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, &c.

THE two great works which God has been pleased to signalize his infinite wisdom and power by, were the creation of the world, and the redemption of mankind; the first of them declared by Moses, and the other by Christ himself *bringing life and immortality to light through the gospel.* But yet so, that, as in the opening of the day, the appearance of light does not presently and totally drive away all darkness, but that some degrees remain and mingle with it: so neither has this glorious revelation of the gospel quite cleared off the obscurity of many great things revealed in it; but that, as God has hereby vouchsafed us light enough to inform and guide our faith, so he has left darkness enough to exercise it too. Upon which account the apostle here designing to set forth the transcendent worth

of the gospel above all other doctrines whatsoever, recommends it to our esteem by these two qualifications and properties eminently belonging to it; as,

First, that it is *the wisdom of God;* and, secondly, that it is *the wisdom of God in a mystery.*

As to the first of which, namely, the gospel's being *the wisdom of God,* that is to say, the grand instance and product of it; if we would take a survey of the nature of wisdom, according to the sense of the ancient philosophers, we shall find Aristotle, in the sixth of his Ethics, and the seventh chapter, defining it, νοῦς καὶ ἐπιστήμη τῶν τιμιωτάτων τῇ φύσει, that is, *the understanding and knowledge of things in their nature the most excellent and valuable.* Where, though it ought to be supposed that Aristotle carried his notion no higher nor farther than the things of nature, and that St. Paul pointed chiefly at things revealed and supernatural; yet I cannot see but that the terms made use of by that great philosopher in the definition, or rather description of wisdom, laid down by him, do with full propriety and fitness fall in with the account here given of this divine wisdom by our apostle in the text, and that, whether we take it for a wisdom respecting speculation, or relating to practice; the things treated of in the gospel (about which the said wisdom is employed) being certainly the noblest and most excellent that can be, upon both accounts: and though it be hard to determine whether of the two ought to have the preeminence, yet I think we may rationally enough conclude, that the wisdom here spoken of is principally of a practical import; as denoting to us God's admirable and steady bringing about his great ends and purposes, by means most suitable and proper to

them, and particularly his accomplishing his grand design of mercy upon the world by the promulgation of the gospel; a doctrine containing in it all the treasures of divine wisdom, so far as the same wisdom has thought fit to reveal them. And yet such has been the blindness and baseness of men's minds, even from the apostle's time down along to ours, (as bad as any,) that this very wisdom has not failed to meet with a sect of men, who, voting themselves the only wits and wise men of the world, (as the greatest sots may easily do,) have made it their business to ridicule and reproach it as downright foolishness; but yet such a sort of foolishness, (if the testimony of an apostle may outweigh the scoffs of a buffoon,) as is *infinitely wiser than all the wisdom of men.* For the very wisest of men do not always compass what they design, but this certainly and effectually does, as being not only the wisdom, but,

Secondly, the power of God too; the first infallible, the other irresistible. In a word, the wisdom here spoken of is a messenger which always goes as far as sent; an instrument which never fails or lurches the great agent who employs it, either in reaching the end he directs it to, or in finishing the work he intends it for: so that, in short, there could not be an higher and a nobler elogy to express the gospel by, than by representing it to us as *the wisdom of God.* For as wisdom in general is the noblest and most sublime perfection of an intellectual nature, and particularly in God himself is the leading, ruling attribute, prescribing to all the rest; so a commendation drawn from thence must needs be the most glorious that can possibly pass upon any action or design proceeding from such an

one: and the apostle seems here most peculiarly to have directed this encomium of the gospel as a defiance to the philosophers of his time, the flustering, vain-glorious Greeks, who pretended so much to magnify, and even adore the wisdom they professed, and with great modesty, no doubt, confined wholly to themselves: a wisdom, I think, little to be envied them; being such, as none who had it could be the better, nor consequently the wiser for.

And thus much for the first thing contained in the words, and proposed from them; namely, that the gospel is *the wisdom of God.* I proceed now to the second, which we shall chiefly insist upon, and that is, concerning the mysteriousness of it; as, that it is *the wisdom of God in a mystery.* For the prosecution of which we shall inquire into, and endeavour to give some account of the reasons, (so far as we may presume to judge of them,) why God should deliver to mankind a religion so full of mysteries as the Christian religion certainly is, and was ever accounted to be. Now the reasons of this in general, I conceive, may be stated upon these two grounds:

First, The nature and quality of the things treated of in the Christian religion. And,

Secondly, The ends to which all religion, both as to the general and particular nature of it, is designed, with relation to the influence which it ought to have upon the minds of men.

And, first of all, for the nature of the things themselves, which are the subject-matter of the Christian religion. There are in them these three qualifications or properties, which do and must of necessity

render them mysterious, obscure, and of difficult apprehension. As,

First, Their surpassing greatness and inequality to the mind of man. The Christian religion, as to a great part of it, is but a kind of comment upon the divine nature; an instrument to convey right conceptions of God into the soul of man, so far as it is capable of receiving them. But now God, we know, is an infinite being, without any bounds or limitations of his essence, wonderful in his actings, inconceivable in his purposes, and inexpressible in his attributes; which yet, as great as they are, if severally taken, give us but an incomplete representation of him. He is another world in himself, too high for our speculations, and too great for our descriptions. For how can such vast and mighty things be crowded into a little, finite understanding? Heaven, I confess, enters into us, as we must into that, by a very narrow passage; but how shall the *King of glory, whom the heavens themselves cannot contain, enter in by these doors?* by a weak imagination, a slender notion, and a contracted intellect? How shall these poor short faculties measure the lengths of his eternity, the breadth and expansions of his immensity, the heights of his prescience, and the depths of his decrees? And, last of all, that unutterable, incomprehensible mystery of two natures united into one person, and again of one and the same nature diffused into a triple personality? All which being some of the prime, fundamental matters treated of in our religion, how can it be otherwise than a system of mysteries, and a knot of dark, inexplicable propositions, since it ex-

hibits to us such things as the very condition of our nature renders us incapable of clearly understanding?

The Socinians, indeed, who would obtrude upon the world (and of late more daringly than ever) a new Christianity of their own inventing, will admit of nothing mysterious in this religion, nothing which the natural reason of man cannot have a clear and comprehensive perception of: and this not only in defiance of the express words of scripture, so frequently and fully affirming the contrary, but also of the constant, universal sense of all antiquity, unanimously confessing an incomprehensibility in many of the articles of the Christian faith. So that these bold persons stand alone by themselves, upon a new bottom, and an upstart principle, not much above an hundred years old, spitting upon all antiquity before them; and (as some who have wrote against them have well observed of them) are the only sect of men in the world who ever pretended to set up or own a religion without either a mystery or a sacrifice belonging to it. For, as we have shewn that they deny the first, so they equally explode the latter, by denying Christ to be properly a priest, or his death to have been a propitiatory oblation for the sins of the world. And now are not these blessed new lights, think we, fit to be encouraged, courted, and have panegyrics made upon their wonderful abilities, forsooth; whilst they on the other side are employing the utmost of those abilities (such as they are) in blaspheming our Saviour, and overturning our religion? But *this is their hour, and the power of darkness.* For it is a truth too manifest to be denied, that there have been more innovations upon

and blasphemies against the chief articles of our faith published in this kingdom, and that after a more audacious and scandalous manner, within these several years last past, than have been known here for some centuries of years before, even those times of confusion, both in church and state, betwixt forty-one and sixty not excepted: and what this may produce and end in, God only at present knows, and I wish the whole nation may not at length feel.

Secondly. A second qualification of the chief things treated of in our religion, and which must needs render them mysterious, is their spirituality and abstraction from all sensible and corporeal matter; of which sort of things it is impossible for the understanding of man to form to itself an exact idea or representation: so that when we hear or read that God is a spirit, and that angels and the souls of men are spirits, our apprehensions are utterly at a loss how to frame any notion or resemblance of them, but are put to float and wander in an endless maze of guesses and conjectures, and know not certainly what to fix upon. For in this case we can fetch in no information or relief to our understandings from our senses; no picture or draught of these things from the reports of the eye; but we are left entirely to the uncertainties of fancy, to the flights and ventures of a bold imagination. And here to illustrate the case a little, let us imagine a man who was born blind, able upon bare hearsay to conceive in his mind all the varieties and curiosities of colour, to draw an exact scheme of Constantinople, or a map of France; to describe the towns, point out the rivers, and distinguish the situations of these and the like great and extraordinary places: and when such an one is able

to do all this, and not before, then perhaps may we also apprehend what a spirit, an angel, or an immaterial being is. The difficulty of understanding which sufficiently appears from this one consideration: that in all the descriptions which we make of God, angels, and spirits, we still describe them by such things as we see, and when we have done, we profess that they are invisible. But then to do this argument right again on the other side: as it would be extremely sottish and irrational for a blind man to conclude and affirm positively that there neither are nor can be any such things as colours, pictures, or landscapes, because he finds that he cannot form to himself any true notion, idea, or mental perception of them; so would it be equally, or rather superlatively more unreasonable for us to deny the great articles of our Christianity, because we cannot frame in our minds any clear, explicit, and exact representation of them. And yet this is the true state of the whole matter, and of the ratiocination of some men about it, how absurd and inconsequent soever we see it is. Let this, therefore, be another and a second cause, why the Christian religion, which treats of and is conversant about such things, must of necessity be mysterious.

Thirdly. A third property of matters belonging to Christianity, and which also renders them mysterious, is their strangeness and unreducibleness to the common methods and observations of nature. I, for my part, cannot look upon any thing (whatsoever others can) as a more fundamental article of the Christian religion, than Christ's satisfaction for sin; by which alone the lost sons of Adam are reconciled to their offended God, and so put into new capaci-

ties of salvation; and yet, perhaps, there is nothing more surprising, strange, and out of the road of common reason than this, if compared with the general course and way of men's acting. For that he who was the offended person should project and provide a satisfaction to himself in the behalf of him who had offended him, and with so much zeal concern himself to solicit a reconciliation with those whom he had no need of being reconciled unto, but might with equal justice and honour have destroyed them, was a thing quite beside the common course of the world; and much more was it so, that a father should deliver up an innocent and infinitely beloved son to be sacrificed for the redemption of his justly hated and abhorred enemies; and on the other hand, that a son who loved his father as much as he could be loved by him, should lay down his life for the declared rebels and enemies of him whom he so transcendently loved, and of himself too: this, I say, was such a transaction, as we can find nothing like or analogous to in all the dealings of men, and cannot but be owned as wholly beside, if not also directly contrary to all human methods. And so true is this, that several things expressly affirmed of God in scripture, relating to the prime articles of our faith, are denied or eluded by the Arians and Socinians, because they cross and contradict the notions taken up by them from what they have observed in created beings, and particularly in men; which yet is a gross fallacy and inconsequence, concluding *ab imparibus tanquam paribus*, and more than sufficiently confuted and blown off by that one passage of the prophet concerning Almighty God, that *his thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as*

our ways, Isa. lv. 8. to which we may add, that neither is his nature as our nature, nor his divine persons as our persons. And if so, where is the Socinian logic in arguing from one to the other? And yet it is manifest, that they hardly make use of any other way of arguing concerning the main points in controversy between them and the church but this.

But there are also two other principal articles of the Christian religion, which do as much transcend the common notice and observation of mankind as the former. One of which is the conversion and change of a man's sinful nature, commonly called the work of *regeneration*, or the *new birth*; concerning which men are apt to wonder (and deservedly too) by what strange power and efficacy it should come to pass, that ever any one should be brought to conquer and shake off those inveterate appetites and desires which are both so violent in their actings, and so early in their original, (as being born with him,) and to have other new ones, and those absolutely contrary to the former, planted in their room. So that when our Saviour, in John iii. discoursed of these things to Nicodemus, a great rabbi amongst the Jews, and told him that *he must be born again*, he was presently amazed, and nonplused at it, as at a great paradox and impossibility; and forthwith began to question, *How can these things be?* In which, indeed, he said no more than what the hearts of most men living are apt to say concerning most of the articles of our Christian religion.

But, above all, the article of the resurrection seems to lie marvellously cross to the common experience of mankind. For who ever was yet seen by

them, after a total consumption into dust and ashes, to rise again, and to resume the same numerical body? This is a thing which, amongst all the rare occurrences of the world, all the wonders and anomalies of nature, was never yet met with in any one single instance; and consequently men must needs be apt to startle, and to be full of thought, and scruple, upon the proposal of so strange a thing to their understandings. And if any one should think that he can make this out by bare reason, (as possibly some opiniators may,) let him by all means in the next place try the strength of his doughty reason about transubstantiation, or turn knight errant in divinity, encounter giants and windmills, and adventure to explain things impossible to be explained. This, therefore, is a third cause of the unavoidable mysteriousness of the chief articles of the Christian religion; namely, that most of them fall neither within the common course of men's actings, nor the compass of their observation.

And thus much for the first ground of the gospel's being delivered to the world in a mystery; namely, the nature and quality of the things treated of in the gospel. I come now to the

Second ground, which is stated upon some of the principal ends and designs of religion. But before I enter upon the discussion of this, may it not be objected, that the grand design of religion is to engage men in the practice of such things as it commands; and that this must needs be so much the more easily effected, by how much the more clearly such things are represented to men's understandings without any mystery or obscurity in them: forasmuch as the way to obey a law is to know it; and

the way to know it, is to have it plainly and clearly propounded to such as are concerned about it?

Now to this I answer, first, that it is as much the design of religion to oblige men to believe the *credenda*, as to practise the *agenda* of it: and, secondly, that notwithstanding the obscurity and mysteriousness of the *credenda*, considered in themselves, there is yet as clear a reason for the belief of these, as for the practice of the other. They exceed indeed the natural force of human reason to comprehend them scientifically, and are therefore proposed, not to our knowledge, but to our belief; forasmuch as belief supplies the want of knowledge, where knowledge is not to be had, and is properly the mind's assent to a thing upon the credit of his testimony who shall report it to us. And thus we assent to the great and mysterious points of our faith: for know and understand them throughly we cannot; but since God has revealed and affirmed them to be true, we may with the highest reason, upon his bare word, believe and assent to them as such.

But then, as for those things that concern our practice, (upon which only the objection proceeds,) they indeed are of that clearness, that innate evidence and perspicuity, even in themselves, that they do, as it were, meet our understandings half way, and being once proposed to us, need not our study, but only our acceptance; as presenting themselves to our first, our easiest, and most early apprehensions. So that in some things it is much more difficult for a man, upon a very ordinary use of his judgment, to be ignorant of his duty than to learn it; as it would be much harder for him, while he is awake, to keep his eyes always shut, than open.

In sum, the articles of our faith are those depths in which the elephant may swim; and the rules of our practice those shallows in which the lamb may wade. But as both light and darkness make but one natural day; so here, both the clearness of the *agenda*, and the obscurity or mystery of the *credenda* of the gospel, constitute but one entire religion. And so much in answer to this objection; which being thus removed, I come now to shew, that the mysteriousness of those parts of the gospel called the *credenda*, or matters of our faith, is most subservient to the great, important ends of religion; and that upon these following accounts:

First, because religion, in the prime institution of it, was designed to make impressions of awe and reverential fear upon men's minds. The mind of man is naturally licentious, and there is nothing which it is more averse from than duty; nothing which it more abhors than restraint. It would, if let alone, lash out, and wantonize in a boundless enjoyment and gratification of all its appetites and inclinations. And therefore God, who designed man to a supernatural end, thought fit also to engage him to a way of living above the bare course of nature; and for that purpose to oblige him to a severe abridgment and control of his mere natural desires. And this can never be done, but by imprinting upon his judgment such apprehensions of dread and terror, as may stave off an eager and luxurious appetite from its desired satisfactions, which the infinite wisdom of God has thought fit in some measure to do, by nonplusing the world with certain new and unaccountable revelations of himself and the divine methods of a mysterious religion.

To protect which from the saucy encroachments of bold minds, he has hedged it in with a sacred and majestic obscurity, in some of the principal parts of it: which that it is the most effectual way to secure a reverence to it from such minds, is as certain as the universal experience of mankind can make it; it being an observation too frequent and common to be at all doubted of, that familiarity breeds contempt; and it holds not more in point of converse, than in point of knowledge. For as easiness of access, frankness and openness of behaviour, does by degrees lay a man open to scorn and contempt, especially from some dispositions; so a full inspection and penetration into all the difficulties and secrets of any object is apt to make the mind insult over it, as over a conquered thing; for all knowledge is a kind of conquest over the thing we know.

Distance preserves respect, and we still imagine some transcendent worth in things above our reach. Moses was never more reverenced than when he wore his veil. Nay, the very *sanctum sanctorum* would not have had such a veneration from the Jews, had they been permitted to enter into it, and to gaze and stare upon it, as often as they did upon the other parts of the temple. The high priest himself, who alone was suffered to enter into it, yet was to do so but once a year; lest the frequency of the sight might insensibly lessen that adoration which so sacred a thing was still to maintain upon his thoughts.

Many men, who in their absence have been great, and admired for their fame, find a diminution of that respect upon their personal presence: even the great apostle St. Paul himself found it so; as he

himself tells us, 2 Cor. x. 10. And upon the same account it is, that the kings of some nations, to keep up a living and a constant awe of themselves in the minds of their subjects, shew themselves to them but once a year: and even that perhaps may be something with the oftenest, considering that persons, whose greatness generally consists rather in the height of their condition than in the depth of their understanding, seldom appear freely and openly, but they expose themselves in more senses than one.

In all great respect or honour shewn, there is something of wonder; but a thing often seen, we know, be it never so excellent, yet ceasing thereby to be new, it ceases also to be wondered at. Forasmuch as it is not the worth or excellency, but the strangeness of a thing which draws the eyes and admiration of men after it; for can any thing in nature be imagined more glorious and beautiful than the sun shining in his full might, and yet how many more spectators and wonderers does the same sun find under an eclipse?

But to pursue this notion and observation yet farther, I conceive it will not be amiss to consider, how it has been the custom of all the sober and wise nations of the world still to reserve the great rites of their religion *in occulto:* thus, how studiously did the Egyptians, those great masters of all learning, lock up their sacred things from all access and knowledge of the vulgar! Whereupon their gods were pictured and represented with their finger upon their mouth, thereby, as it were, enjoining silence to their votaries, and forbidding all publication of their mysteries. Nor was this all, but, for the

better concealing of the *sacra arcana* of their religion, they used also a peculiar character unknown to the common people, and understood only by themselves; and last of all, that they might yet the more surely keep off all others from any acquaintance with these secrets, the priesthood was made hereditary amongst them, by which means they easily secured and confined the knowledge of their sacerdotal rites wholly within their own family. The like also is reported of the Phœnicians, the Babylonians, and the Grecians, that they had their ἱερὰ γράμματα, and their ἰδίους χαρακτῆρας, their sacred and peculiar way of writing, by which they rescued the revered mysteries of their religion from the rude inspection of the rout. And lastly, that the same course of secrecy and concealment was also followed by the Romans, though in a different way, and not by the use of such peculiar characters, is sufficiently evident from that known introduction and prologue to their sacred rites, *Procul este profani;* by which they drove far away the profane; and such were all those accounted, who were not actually engaged in the said religious performances. And now to what purpose do these several instances serve, but to shew us, that as in the Jewish church the people were not suffered to enter into the holy of holies, nor to pry or look into the ark, no, nor so much as to touch it, and all this by the particular, express prohibition of God himself; so amongst the heathens, the most civilized, learned, and best reputed nations for wisdom, have, by the bare light and conduct of their natural reason, still taken the same way to establish in men's minds a veneration for their religion: that is, by keeping the chief parts and mysteries of

it shut up from the promiscuous view and notice of that sort of men, who are but too quickly brought, God knows, to slight and nauseate what they once think they understand.

Now that the several religions of the forementioned nations of the gentiles were false and idolatrous, I readily own; but that their method of preserving the reverence of them (which is all that I here insist upon) was founded upon any persuasion they had of the falsehood and idolatry of the said religions, this I absolutely deny; since it is not imaginable, that any sort of men whatsoever could heartily own and profess any sort of religion which they themselves fully believed to be false; and therefore since it could not be but that they believed their several religions true, (though really and indeed they were not so,) yet the way which they took to keep up an awful esteem of them in the hearts of such as professed them, was no doubt founded upon an excellent philosophy and knowledge of the temper of man's mind, in relation to sacred matters. So that, although their subject was bad, yet their argumentation and discourse upon it was highly rational.

Secondly. A second ground of the mysteriousness of religion, (as it is delivered by God to mankind,) is his most wise purpose thereby to humble the pride and haughtiness of man's reason: a quality so peculiarly odious to God, that it may be said, not so much to imprint upon men the image, as to communicate to them the very essence of Lucifer. The way by which man first fell from his original integrity and happiness was by pride, founded upon an irregular desire of knowledge; and therefore it seems to be a course most agreeable to the divine wisdom

to contrive man's recovery by such a method as should abase and nonplus him in that very perfection, whereof the ambitious improvement first cast him down from that glorious condition. In short, man would be like God in knowledge, and so he fell; and now if he will be like him in happiness too, God will effect it in such a way, as shall convince him to his face that he knows nothing. The whole course of his salvation shall be all riddle and mystery to him; he shall, as I may so express it, be carried up to heaven in a cloud. Instead of evidence springing from things themselves, and clear knowledge growing from such an evidence, his understanding must now be contented with the poor, dim light of faith, which, as I have shewn, guides only in the strength and light of another's knowledge, and is properly a seeing with another's eyes; as being otherwise wholly unable to inform us about the great things of our peace, by any immediate inspection of those things themselves.

Whereupon we find the gospel set up, as it were, in triumph over all that wisdom and philosophy which the learned and more refined parts of the world so much boasted of, and valued themselves upon; as we have it in the 1 Cor. i. from the 17th to the end of the chapter: *Where is the wise, where is the scribe,* and *where is the disputer of this world?* God is there said to have *made foolish the very wisdom of it.* So that when *the world by wisdom knew not God;* that is, by all their philosophy could not find out, either how he was to be served, or by what means to be enjoyed, this grand discovery was made to them *by the foolishness of preaching,* (as the world then esteemed it;) nay, and of

preaching the cross too; a thing utterly exploded both by Jew and Greek, as the greatest absurdity imaginable, and contrary to all their received principles and reasonings about the way of man's attaining to true happiness. And yet, as high as they bore themselves, their strongest reasonings were to bend to this weakness of God, (as the apostle, in derision of those who thought it so, there calls it,) and their sublimest wisdom to stoop to this foolishness, if so be they were not resolved to be too strong and too wise, forsooth, to be saved. For as the primitive effect of knowledge was first to puff up, and then to throw down; so the contrary method of grace and faith is first to depress, and then to advance.

The difficulty and strangeness of some of the chief articles of our religion, such as are those of the Trinity, and of the incarnation and satisfaction of Christ, are notable instruments in the hand of God, to keep the soul low and humble, and to check those self-complacencies which it is apt to grow into by an overweening conceit of its own opinions, more than by any other thing whatsoever. For man naturally is scarce so fond of the offspring of his body, as of that of his soul. His notions are his darlings; so that neither children nor self are half so dear to him as the only-begotten of his mind. And therefore, in the dispensations of religion, God will have this only-begotten, this best-beloved, this Isaac of our souls, (above all other offerings that a man can bring him,) to be sacrificed, and given up to him.

Thirdly, God in great wisdom has been pleased to put a mysteriousness into the greatest articles of

our religion, thereby to engage us in a closer and more diligent search into them. He would have them the objects of our study, and for that purpose has rendered them hard and difficult: for no man studies things plain and evident, and such as by their native clearness do even prevent our search, and of their own accord offer themselves to our understandings. The foundation of all inquiry is the obscurity as well as worth of the thing inquired after. And God has thought good to make the constitution and complexion of our religion such as may fit it to be our business and our task; to require and take up all our intellectual strengths, and, in a word, to try the force of our best, our noblest, and most active faculties. For if it were not so, then surely human literature could no ways promote the study of divinity, nor could skill in the liberal arts and sciences be any step to raise us to those higher speculations. But so the experience of the world (maugre all fanatic pretences, all naked truths, and naked gospels, or rather shameful nakedness, instead of either truth or gospel) has ever yet found it to be. For still the schools are and must be the standing nurseries of the church: and all the cultivation and refinement they can bestow upon the best wits, in the use of the most unwearied industry, are but a means to facilitate their advance higher, and to let them in more easily at the strait gate of those more hidden and involved propositions, which Christianity would employ and exercise the mind of man with. For suppose that we could grasp in the whole compass of nature, as to all the particulars and varieties of being and motion, yet

we shall find it a vast, if not an impossible leap from thence to ascend to the full comprehension of any one of God's attributes; and much more from thence to the mysterious economy of the divine persons; and lastly, to the astonishing work of the world's redemption by the blood of the son of God himself, condescending to be a man, that he might die for us. All which were things hidden from the wise and prudent, in spite of all their wisdom and prudence; as being heights above the reach, and depths beyond the fathom of any mortal intellect.

We are commanded by Christ to *search the scriptures*, as the great repository of all the truths and mysteries of our religion; and whosoever shall apply himself to a through performance of this high command, shall find difficulty and abstruseness enough in the things searched into to perpetuate his search: for they are a rich mine, which the greatest wit and diligence may dig in for ever, and still find new matter to entertain the busiest contemplation with, even to the utmost period of the most extended life. For no man can outlive the reasons of inquiry, so long as he carries any thing of ignorance about him; and that every man must and shall do, while he is in this state of mortality: for he, who himself is but a part of nature, shall never compass or comprehend it all.

Truth, we are told, dwells low, and in a bottom; and the most valued things of the creation are concealed and hidden by the great Creator of them from the common view of the world. Gold and diamonds, with the most precious stones and metals, lie couched and covered in the bowels of the earth; the

very condition of their being giving them their burial too. So that violence must be done to nature, before she will produce and bring them forth.

And then, as for what concerns the mind of man, God has, in his wise providence, cast things so as to make the business of men in this world improvement; that so the very work of their condition may still remind them of the imperfection of it. For surely, he who is still pressing forward, has not yet obtained the prize. Nor has he who is only growing in knowledge, yet arrived to the full stature of it. Growth is progress; and all progress designs and tends to the acquisition of something which the growing person is not yet possessed of.

Fourthly. The fourth and last reason which I shall allege of the mysterious dispensation of the gospel here is, that the full, entire knowledge of it may be one principal part of our felicity and blessedness hereafter. All those heights and depths which we now stand so much amazed at, and which so confound and baffle the subtlest and most piercing apprehension, shall then be made clear, open, and familiar to us. God shall then display the hidden glories of his nature, and withal fortify the eye of the soul so that it shall be able to behold and take them in, so far as the capacities of an human intellect shall enable it to do. We shall then see the mysteries of the Trinity, and of the incarnation of Christ, and of the resurrection of the dead unriddled and made plain to us; all the knots of God's decrees and providence untied, and made fit for our understanding, as well as our admiration. We shall then be transported with a nobler kind of wonder, not the

effect of ignorance, but the product of a clearer and more advanced knowledge. We shall admire and adore the works and attributes of the great God, because we shall see the glorious excellency of the one, and the admirable contrivances of the other, made evident to our very reason; so as to inform and satisfy that which before they could only astonish and amaze.

The happiness of heaven shall be an happiness of vision and of knowledge; and we shall there pass from the darkness of our native ignorance, from the dusk and twilight of our former notions, into the broad light of an everlasting day; a day which shall leave nothing undiscovered to us which can be fit for us to know: and therefore the apostle, comparing our present with our future condition in respect of those different measures of knowledge allotted to each of them, 1 Cor. xiii. 12, tells us, *that here we see but darkly, and in a glass;* and a glass, we know, often gives a false, but always a faint representation of the object: *but then,* says he, *shall we see God face to face.* And again, *Here we know but in part, but there we shall know as we are known; and that which is perfect being come, then that which is in part shall be done away.* Reason being then unclogged from the body, shall have its full flight, and a free, uncontrolled passage into all things intelligible. We shall then surmount these beggarly rudiments and mean helps of knowledge, which now by many little steps gradually raise us to some short speculation of the nature of things. Our knowledge shall be then intuitive, and above discourse; not proceeding by a long circuit of antecedents and conse-

quents, as now in this vale of imperfection it is forced to do; but it shall then fully inform the whole mind, and take in the whole object, by one single and substantial act.

For as in that condition we shall enjoy the happiness, so we shall also imitate the perfection of angels, who outshine the rest of the creation in nothing more than in a transcendent ability of knowing and judging, which is the very glory and crowning excellency of a created nature. Faith itself shall be then accounted too mean a thing to accompany us in that estate; for being only conversant about things not seen, it can have no admittance into that place, the peculiar privilege of which shall be to convey to us the knowledge of those things by sight, which before we took wholly upon trust. And thus I have given you some account, first of the mysteriousness of the gospel, and then of the reasons of it; and that both from the nature of the things themselves which are treated of in it, as also from those great ends and purposes which God in his infinite wisdom has designed it to.

From all which discourse several very weighty inferences might be drawn, but I shall collect and draw from thence only these three; as,

First, The high reasonableness of men's relying upon the judgment of the whole church in general, and of their respective teachers and spiritual guides in particular, rather than upon their own private judgments, in such important and mysterious points of religion as we have been hitherto discoursing of; I say, upon the judgment of those who have made it their constant business, as well as their avowed profession, to acquaint themselves with these mysteries,

(so far as human reason can attain to them,) and that in order to the instruction and information of others.

Certain it is, that there is no other profession in the world, besides this of divinity, wherein men do not own something of a mystery, and accordingly reckon it both highly rational, and absolutely necessary in many cases, to resign and submit their own judgments to the judgments of such as profess a skill in any art or science whatsoever. For whose judgment ought in all reason to be followed about any thing, his, who has made it his whole work and calling to understand that thing; or his, who has bestowed his whole time, parts, and labour upon something else, which is wholly foreign to it, and has no cognation at all with it?

But there is not only reason to persuade, but also authority to oblige men in the present case. For see in what notable words the prophet asserts this privilege to the priesthood under the Mosaic economy, Mal. ii. 7. *The priest's lips*, says he, *should preserve knowledge, and the people should seek the law at his mouth;* (adding this as a reason of the same,) *for*, says he, *he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.*

For which words, no doubt, this prophet would have passed for a man of heat, or high churchman, nowadays: for, in good earnest, they run very high, and look very severely upon our so much applauded, or rather doated upon liberty of conscience, and are so far from casting the least eye of favour upon it, that they are a more direct and mortal stab to it, than all the pleas, arguments, and apologies I could ever yet read or hear of, have been a defence of it.

Nor does the same privilege sink one jot lower under the Christian constitution; for as we have al-

ready shewn that the gospel is full of mysteries, so, 1 Cor. iv. 1, the ministers of the gospel are declared the *stewards of these mysteries;* and whatsoever any one dispenses as a steward, he dispenses with the authority and in the strength of an office and commission; and I believe it will be hard to prove, that a minister of the gospel can be obliged to dispense or declare any thing to the people, which the people are not upon his declaration of it equally bound to believe and assent to.

An implicit faith indeed in our spiritual guides (such as the church of Rome holds) I own to be a great absurdity; but a due deference and submission to the judgment of the said guides in the discharge of their ministry, I affirm to be as great a duty. And I state the measures of this submission, in a belief of, and an obedience to, all that a man's spiritual guide shall in that capacity declare and enjoin, provided that a man does not certainly know, or at least upon very great and just grounds doubt, any thing to the contrary: (which two conditions, I allow, ought always to be supposed in this case:) and then, if no objection from either of these shall interpose, I affirm, that every man stands obliged, by the duty he owes to his spiritual pastor, to believe and obey whatsoever his said pastor shall by virtue of his pastoral office deliver to him. In a word, if men would but seriously and impartially consider these three things; first, that the gospel, or Christian religion, is, for the most part of it, made up of mysteries; secondly, that God has appointed a certain order of men to declare and dispense these mysteries; and thirdly and lastly, that it was his wisdom thus to order both these; certainly men would both treat the gospel itself more like

a mystery, and the ministers of the gospel more like the dispensers of so high and sacred a mystery, than the guise and fashion of our present blessed times disposes them to do; that is, in other words, men would be less confident of their own understandings, and more apt to pay reverence and submission to the understandings of those, who are both more conversant in these matters than they can pretend to be, and whom the same wisdom of God has thought fit to appoint over them as their guides. For the contrary practice can proceed from nothing but an high self-opinion, and a man's being wise in his own conceit, which is a sure way to be so in nobody's else.

In fine, every one is apt to think himself able to be his own divine, his own priest, and his own teacher; and he should do well to be his own physician, and his own lawyer too: and then, as upon such a course he finds himself speed in the matters of this world, let him upon the same reckon of his success in the other.

Secondly. We learn also from the foregoing particulars, the gross unreasonableness and the manifest sophistry of men's making whatsoever they find by themselves not intelligible, (that is to say, by human reason not comprehensible,) the measure whereby they would conclude the same also to be impossible. This, I say, is a mere fallacy, and a wretched inconsequence: and yet nothing occurs more commonly (and that as a principle taken for granted) in the late writings of some heterodox, pert, unwary men; and particularly it is the main hinge upon which all the Socinian arguments against the mysteries of our religion turn and depend; but withal so extremely remote is it from all truth, that there is not the least

shew or shadow of reason assignable for it, but upon this one supposition, namely, that the reason or mind of man is capable of comprehending, or throughly understanding, whatsoever it is possible for an infinite divine power to do. This, I say, must be supposed; for no other foundation can support the truth of this proposition, to wit, That whatsoever is humanly not intelligible, is and ought to be reckoned upon the same account also impossible. But then every one must needs see and explode the horrible falseness of the forementioned supposition, upon which alone this assertion is built; and consequently this assertion itself must needs be altogether as false.

For who can comprehend, or throughly understand, how the soul is united to, and how it acts by and upon the body? Who can comprehend or give a full account how sensation is performed? or who can lay open to us the whole mechanism of motion in all the springs and wheels of it? Nay, who can resolve and clear off all the difficulties about the composition of a continued quantity, as whether it is compounded of parts divisible or indivisible? both of which are attended with insuperable objections. And yet all these things are not only possible, but also actually existent in nature. From all which therefore, and from a thousand more such instances, (which might easily be produced,) I conclude, that for any one to deny or reject the mysteries of our religion as impossible, because of the incomprehensibleness of them, is, upon all true principles, both of divinity and philosophy, utterly inconsequent and irrational.

Thirdly. In the third and last place, we learn also

from what has been discoursed, the great vanity and extravagant presumption of such as pretend to clear up all mysteries, and determine all controversies in religion. The attempts of which sort of men I can liken to nothing so properly as to those pretences to infallible cures, which we daily see posted up in every corner of the streets; and I think it is great pity, but that both these sort of pretences were *posted up together*. For I know no universal, infallible remedy, which certainly cures, or rather carries off all diseases, and puts an end to all disputes, but death: which yet, for all that, is a remedy not much in request. Quacks and mountebanks are doubtless a very dangerous sort of men in physic, but much more so in divinity: they are both of them always very large in pretence and promise, but short in performance, and generally fatal in their practice. For there are several depths and difficulties (as I noted before) both in philosophy and divinity, which men of parts and solid learning, after all their study, find they cannot come to the bottom of, but are forced to give them over as things unresolvable, and will by no means be brought to pronounce dogmatically on either side of the question.

Amongst which said difficulties perhaps there is hardly a greater, and more undecidable problem in natural theology, and which has not only exercised but even crucified the greatest wits of all ages, than the reconciling of the immutable certainty of God's foreknowledge with the freedom and contingency of all human acts, both good and evil, so foreknown by him. Both parts of which problem are certainly true; but how to explain and make out the accord between them, without overthrowing one of them,

has hitherto exceeded the force of man's reason. And therefore Socinus very roundly, or rather indeed very profanely, denies any such prescience of future contingents to be in God at all. But as profane as he was in thus cutting asunder this knot, others have been as ridiculous in pretending to untie it. For do not some, in their discourses about the divine attributes and decrees, promise the world such a clear account, such an open explicit scheme of these great things, as should make them plain and evident even to the meanest capacities? And the truth is, if to any capacities at all, it must be to the meanest; for to those of an higher pitch, and a larger compass, these things neither are, nor will, nor ever can be made evident. And if such persons could but obtain of Heaven a continuance of life, till they made good what they so confidently undertake, they would be in a sure way to outlive, not only Methuselah, but even the world itself. But then, in come some other undertakers, and promise us the same or greater wonders in Christian theology, offering, by some new whimsical explications of their own, to make the deepest mysteries of our Christian faith as plain, easy, and intelligible, forsooth, as that two and two make four; that is, in other words, they will represent and render them such mysteries as shall have nothing at all mystical in them.

And now is not this, think we, a most profound invention, and much like the discovery of some New-found-land, some O Brazil in divinity? With so much absurd confidence do some discourse, or rather romance upon the most mysterious points of the Christian faith, that any man of sense and sobriety would be apt to think such persons not only beside

their subject, but beside themselves too. And the like censure we may justly pass upon all other such idle pretenders; the true character of which sort of men is, that he who thinks and says he can understand all mysteries, and resolve all controversies, undeniably shews that he really understands none.

In the mean time, we may here observe the true way by which these great and adorable mysteries of our religion come first to be ridiculed and blasphemed, and at length totally laid aside by some; and that is, by their being first innovated upon, and new-modelled, by the bold, senseless, and absurd explications of others. For first of all such innovators break down those sacred mounds which antiquity had placed about these articles, and then heretics and blasphemers rush in upon them, trample them under foot, and quite throw them out of our creed. This course we have seen taken amongst us, and the church (God bless it, and those who are over it) has been hitherto profoundly silent at it; but how long God (whose honour is most concerned) will be so too, none can tell. For if some novelists may put what sense they please upon the writings of Moses, and others do the like with the articles of the Christian church also, (and the greatest encouragement attend both,) I cannot see (unless some extraordinary providence prevent it) but that both these religions are in a direct way to be run down amongst us, and that in a very short time too.

Let every sober, humble, and discreet Christian, therefore, be advised to dread all tampering with the mysteries of our faith, either by any new and unwarrantable explications of them, or descants upon them. The great apostle of the gentiles, who, I am

sure, had as clear a knowledge of the whole mystery of the gospel as any in his time, and a greater plenty of revelations than any one could pretend to since him, treated these matters with much another kind of reverence, crying out with horror and amazement, *O the depth and unsearchableness of the things of God!* in Rom. xi. 33. And again, *Who is sufficient for these things?* in 2 Cor. ii. 16. This was his judgment, these were his thoughts of these dreadful and mysterious depths; and the same, no doubt, will be the thoughts and judgment of all others concerning them, who have any thing of depth themselves. For as the same apostle again has it in that most noted place in the 1 Tim. iii. 16. *Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, believed on in the world, and received up into glory.*

To which God infinitely wise, holy, and great, be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

The lineal Descent of Jesus of Nazareth from David by his blessed Mother the Virgin Mary:

PROVED IN

A DISCOURSE

ON REV. XXII. 16.

REV. xxii. 16.

I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.

THE words here pitched upon by me are the words of Christ now glorified in heaven, and seem, as it were, by the union of a double festival, to represent to us both the Nativity and Epiphany, while they lead us to the birth of Christ by the direction of a star; though with this difference, I confess, that both the means directing, and the term directed to, do in this place coincide; and Christ the person speaking, as well as spoken of, is here the only star to direct us to himself. The nativity of Christ is certainly a compendium of the whole gospel, in that it thus both begins and ends it, reaching from the first chapter of St. Matthew to this last of the Revelation; which latter, though it be confessedly a book of mysteries, and a system of occult divinity, yet surely it can contain nothing more mysterious and stupendous than the mystery here

wrapt up in the text; where we have Christ declaring himself both the *root and the offspring of David.* For that any one should be both father and son to the same person, produce himself, be cause and effect too, and so the copy give being to its original, seems at first sight so very strange and unaccountable, that, were it not to be adored as a mystery, it would be exploded as a contradiction. But since the gospel has lifted us above our reason, and taught us one of the great arcana of heaven, by assuring us that divinity and humanity may cohabit in one subsistence, that two natures may concur in the same person, and heaven and earth mingle without confusion; we being thus taught and persuaded, shall here endeavour to exhibit the whole economy of Christ's glorious person, and to shew what a miracle he was, as well as what miracles he did, by considering him under these three several respects.

First, as the *root;* secondly, as the *offspring of David;* and thirdly, as he is here termed, *the bright and morning star.*

And first for the first of these:

Christ was the *root of David;* but how? Certainly in respect of something in him which had a being before David. But his humanity had not so, being of a much later date, and therefore, as a mere man, he could not be the *root of David;* whereupon it follows that he must have been so in respect of some other nature: but what that nature was will be the question. The Arians, who denied his divinity, but granted his preexistence to his humanity, (which the Socinians absolutely deny,) held him to be the first-born of the creation; the first and most

glorious creature which God made, a spiritual substance produced by him long before the foundation of the world, and afterwards, in the fulness of time, sent into a body, and so made incarnate. This is what they hold; whereby it appears how much they differ from the school of Socinus, though some with great impertinence confound them. Arius taught that Christ had a spiritual subsistence before the world began: Socinus held that he was a mere man, and had no subsistence or being at all, till such time as he was conceived by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin Mary. I shall not much concern myself about these two opinions, as they stand in opposition to one another; but only remark this of them, that Socinus asserts a thing, considered barely in itself, more agreeable to reason, which can much better conceive of Christ as a man naturally consisting of soul and body, than as such an heterogeneous composition of a body and (I know not what) strange spiritual substance existing before the creation, as the Arians represent him: but then, on the other side, the opinion of Arius is, of the two, much more difficult to be confuted by scripture: for as to Socinus, the chief arguments brought from thence against him, are not such as are taken from the name or actions of God, attributed to Christ; which he thinks he easily answers by asserting that *God* is a name, not of *nature*, but of *power* and *dominion;* and that Christ is called God, because of the power and government of all things put into his hands; as earthly kings also, in their proportion, have in scripture the same title upon the same account. But the arguments which bear hardest upon Socinus are such as are taken from those scriptures, which, beyond all

possibility of rational contradiction, declare the pre-existence and precedent being of Christ to his conception; such as John viii. 58. *Before Abraham was, I am;* and in John xvii. 5. *Glorify me, O Father, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was;* which all the Socinians in the world could never yet give any clear, proper, and natural exposition of; but unnaturally and illogically pervert and distort them, in defiance of sense and reason, and all the received ways of interpretation. But now, as for Arius, the allegation of these and the like scriptures prejudice not his hypothesis at all; who grants Christ to have been a glorious spiritual substance, of an existence not only before Abraham, but also before Adam, and the angels themselves, and the whole host of the creation. But what? Was Christ then the *root of David* only in respect of this spiritual, preexisting, created substance, first found out and set up by Arius? No, certainly; for the scripture, and (the best comment upon the scripture) a general council, and that also the first and most famous, even the council of Nice, have condemned this. And all those scriptures which make Christ either one with or equal to the Father, clearly confute and overthrow so absurd as well as blasphemous an assertion. Let this therefore be fixed upon, that Christ was the *root*, or original of David, as he was of all mankind besides; namely, in respect of his divinity; of that infinite, eternal power, which displayed itself in the works of the creation: *for by him all things were made*, as the evangelist tells us, John i. 3. But how ready natural reason will be to rise up against this assertion, I am not ignorant; and how [that Jesus of Nazareth,

a man like ourselves, should be accounted by nature God, the Creator of the world, omniscient, omnipotent, and eternal,] is looked upon by many as a proposition, not only false, but foolish, and fitter to be laughed than disputed out of the world; this also is no surprise to us. But then, on the other side, that this is a thing not to be founded upon, or to take its rise from the bare discourses of reason, he must be very much a stranger to reason himself, who shall venture to deny; for if it may be proved by reason, (as I doubt not but it may,) that the scripture is the word of God, addressed to men, and consequently ought to be understood and interpreted according to the familiar natural way of construction proper to human writings; then I affirm, that to deny Christ to be naturally God is irrational; when his being so is so frequently asserted throughout the whole scripture, and that in as clear terms as it is possible for one man to express his mind by to another, if it were his purpose to declare this very thing to him.

And therefore I have often wondered at the preposterous tenets of Socinus, and that, not so much for his denying the natural deity of our Saviour, as that he should do it after he had wrote a book for the authority of the scripture. For upon the same reasons that he and his sect deny the deity of Christ, I should rather deny the scripture to be of divine authority. They say, for Christ to be God is a thing absurd and impossible: from which I should argue, that that writing or doctrine which affirms a thing absurd and impossible, cannot be true, and much less the word of God. And that the gospel affirms so much of Christ, we may appeal to the judgment of any impartial heathen, who understands the lan-

guage in which it is written. But he who first denies the deity of Christ as absurd and impossible, and thereupon rejects the divine authority of the scripture for affirming it, may be presumed, upon the supposal of the former, to do the latter very rationally. So that he who would take the most proper and direct way to convince such an one of his heresy, (if there be any convincing of one who first takes up his opinion, and then seeks for reasons for it,) must not, I conceive, endeavour in the first place to convince him out of scripture, [that Jesus Christ is God,] but turn the whole force and stress of his disputation to the proof of this, [that the Scripture is the word of God to mankind, and upon that account ought to be interpreted as the writings of men use and ought to be;] and if so, he who will make sense of them must grant the divinity of Christ to be clearly asserted in them, and irrefragably inferred from them. In short, if the adversaries of Christ's divinity can prove Christ not to be God, they must by consequence prove that the scriptures, naturally and grammatically interpreted, are not the word of God: but, on the contrary, the church being assured that the scriptures, so interpreted, are the word of God, is consequently assured also, that Christ is and must be God. Nevertheless, if, according to the unreasonable demands of the men of this sect, this and all other mysteries of our religion should be put to answer for themselves at the bar of human reason, I would fain know, wherein consists the paradox of asserting Christ to be God? For no man says that his human nature is his divine, or that he is God as he is man. But we assert, that he who is God is also man, by having two natures united into one and

the same subsistence. And if the soul, which is an immaterial substance, is united to the body, which is a material; though the case is not altogether the same, yet it is so very near, that we may well ask, what repugnancy there is, but that the divine nature may as well be united to the human? I believe, if we reduce things to our way of conception, we shall find it altogether as hard to conceive the conjunction of the two former, as of the two latter: and this, notwithstanding that other difference also of finite and infinite between them: for why a finite and an infinite being may not be united to one another by an intimate and inseparable relation, and an assumption of the finite into the personal subsistence of the infinite, I believe it will be hard for any one to give a solid and demonstrative reason: for scoffs and raillery (the usual arguments brought against it) I am sure are not so. But I forget myself; for the persons here disputed against believe not the soul to be either immaterial or [a]naturally immortal; but are much the same with the Sadducees, and upon that account fitter to be crushed by the civil magistrate, as destructive to government and society, than to be confuted as merely heretics in religion.

I conclude, therefore, against the scoffs of the heathens, the disputations of the Jews, the impiety of

[a] Tantum id mihi videtur statui posse, post hanc vitam, hominis animam sive animum non ita per se subsistere, ut ulla præmia pœnasve sentiat, vel etiam illa sentiendi sit capax.

And again: In ipso primo homine totius immortalitatis rationem uni gratiæ Dei tribuo; nec in ipsa creatione quicquam immortalis vitæ in homine agnosco. *Socin.* Ep. 5. *ad Joh. Volkelium.* See more of the like nature, cited by the learned Dr. Ashwell, in his Dissertation *de Socino et Socinianismo*, p. 187, 188, 189, &c.

Arius, and the bold, blasphemous assertions of Socinus, that the man Christ Jesus, born at Bethlem, of the Virgin Mary, is God, God by nature, the maker of all things, the fountain of being, the Ancient of Days, the First and the Last, of whose being there was no beginning, and of whose kingdom there shall be no end. And in this one proposition the very life and heart of Christianity does consist. For as, that there is a God, is the great foundation of religion in general: so, that Jesus Christ is God, is the foundation of the Christian religion: and I believe it will one day be found, that he who will not acknowledge Christ for his Creator, shall never have him for his Redeemer.

Having thus shewn how Christ was *the root and original of David,* pass we now to the next thing proposed, which is to shew,

Secondly, That he was his *offspring* too, and so, having asserted his divinity, to clear also his humanity. That the Christian religion be true, is the eternal concernment of all those who believe it, and look to be saved by it: and that it be so, depends upon Jesus Christ's being the true promised Messias; (the grand and chief thing asserted by him in his gospel;) and lastly, Christ's being the true Messias depends upon his being the son of David, and king of the Jews. So that unless this be evinced, the whole foundation of Christianity must totter and fall, as being a cheat, and an imposture upon the world. And therefore let us undertake to clear this great important truth, and to demonstrate that Jesus of Nazareth was the true seed of David, and rightful king of the Jews.

His pedigree is drawn down by two of the evan-

gelists; by St. Matthew in his 1st chapter, and by St. Luke in his 3d, from whence our adversaries oppose us with these two great difficulties.

First, That these two evangelists disagree in deducing of his pedigree.

Secondly, That supposing they were proved to agree, yet both of their pedigrees terminate in Joseph, and therefore belong not to Jesus, who was not indeed the son of Joseph, but of Mary.

In answer to which we are to observe, that concerning this whole matter there are two opinions.

First, That both in St. Matthew and St. Luke only the pedigree of Joseph is recounted; in the first his natural, in the other his legal: for it being a known custom among the Jews, that a man dying without issue, his brother should marry his widow, and raise up seed to him, Eli hereupon dying without any child, Jacob took his wife, and of her begat Joseph; who by this means was naturally the son of Jacob, as St. Matthew deduces it, and legally or reputedly the son of Eli, as St. Luke. And then to make Jacob and Eli brothers, who are there set down in different lines, it is said that Matthan, of the line of Solomon, and Melchi, of the line of Nathan, successively married the same woman, (Estha by name,) of whom Matthan begat Jacob, and Melchi begat Eli: whereupon Jacob and Eli being brothers by the mother, though of different fathers, Eli dying without issue, Jacob was obliged by law to marry his relict, and so to raise up seed to his brother Eli.

Now all this is grounded upon an ancient story of one Julius Africanus, recorded by Eusebius, in his first book and seventh chapter. And of late Faustus

Socinus; (who, having denied Christ's divine nature, was resolved to cut him short both root and branch, and to deny his human too, at least as to the most considerable circumstance of it, which concerned the credit of his being the true Messias;) he, I say, catches at this forlorn story, and ascribes much to it in that book of his called his *Lectiones Sacræ;* and though generally a professed despiser of antiquity, yet when he thinks it may make any thing for his purpose, he can catch at every fabulous scrap of it, and thereupon vouches this as authentic, even for its antiquity. From which opinion it follows, that Christ was only the reputed son of David, that is to say, because his mother was married to one who was really of David's line. And this the whole sect of Socinus affirms to be sufficient to denominate and make Christ the son of David, and accordingly allow him so to be upon no other or nearer account.

But of the authors and assertors of this opinion we may well demand, that admitting Christ might upon this account be called the son of David, in the large and loose way of that denomination, yet how could he for this only reason be called the seed of David? nay, and, what is yet more full and express, be said to be *made of the seed of David*, as it is in Romans i. 3. and further, to be *the fruit of his loins*, as it is in Acts ii. 30. I say, with what propriety, or accord with the common use of speaking, could one man be said to be another man's seed, and *the fruit of his loins*, when he had no other relation to him in the world, than that his mother only married with a person who stood so related to that other? I believe the Jews would desire no greater a concession from us than this, whereby to conclude and

argue Jesus of Nazareth not to have been the true Messiah. Let us therefore leave this opinion to itself, as destructive to the main foundation of our religion, and fit to be owned by none but the mortal enemies of Christ and Christianity, the Jews and the Socinians; and so pass to the

Second opinion, which is, that both Joseph and Mary came from David by true and real descent, and that, as Joseph's genealogy and pedigree is set down in that line which St. Matthew gives an account of, so the Virgin Mary's lineage is recited in that which is recorded by St. Luke; which opinion, as it has been generally received by divines of the greatest note, and best answers those difficulties and objections which the other is beset with; so I shall endeavour fully to clear and set it down in these following propositions.

1. The first proposition is this, That the designs of the two evangelists, in their respective deductions of our Saviour's pedigree, are very different. For St. Matthew intends only to set down his political or royal pedigree, by which he had right to the crown of the Jews; but St. Luke shews his natural descent through the several successions of those from whom he took flesh and blood. And that this is so, besides that natural reason taken from the impossibility of one and the same person's having two several fathers, as St. Matthew and St. Luke seem at first sight to import; we have these farther arguments for the said assertion; as, first, that St. Matthew begins his reckoning only from Abraham, to whom the first promise of the kingdom was made. Gen. xvii. 6. But St. Luke runs his line up to Adam, the first head and fountain of human nature; which

fairly shews that one deduced only his title to the crown, the other the natural descent of his humanity. And then, in the second place, that St. Matthew used the word [*begat*] only in a political sense, is further clear from this, that he applies it to him who had no child, even to Jeconiah, of whom it is expressly said in Jeremiah xxii. 30, that *God wrote him childless.* Whereupon, being deposed by the king of Babylon, Zedekiah his uncle was made king, and afterwards, upon the removal of him also for his rebellion, (there remaining no more of the line of Solomon,) Salathiel, being next of kin, was declared king of the Jews; which Salathiel, upon that account, is said to be begot by Jeconiah, in St. Matthew; not because he was naturally his son, but legally and politically so, as succeeding him in the inheritance of the crown. For though in 1 Chron. iii. 17. there is mention of Assir and of Salathiel, as it were of two sons of Jeconiah[a]; yet, in truth, Assir there is not the proper name of a person, nor of any son of Jeconiah, but is only an appellative of Jeconiah himself, signifying one under captivity, or in bonds, as Jeconiah then was in Babylon, when Salathiel was declared king. And that Salathiel is not there set down as his son in a natural sense, is evident from the 16th verse of the same chapter, where Zedekiah is likewise said to be his son, though naturally he was his uncle; yet because Zedekiah first succeeded him in the kingdom, and Salathiel next, Jeconiah still surviving, therefore both of them, in that political sense I spoke of, are said to be his sons, whom, in the natural sense, the

[a] As it stands rectified by Junius and Tremellius, who place the comma after Assir, and not between Jeconiah and that.

prophet Jeremy, as has been shewn, declares to have been childless.

2. [a] The second proposition is this, That as David had several sons by former wives, so by Bathsheba also he had three, besides Solomon, of which the eldest next to him was Nathan; and that Christ descended naturally from David, not by Solomon, but by Nathan. And accordingly, that St. Luke deduces only Nathan's line; upon which account it is, that the Jews at this day, in opposition to the Christians, make it one main article of their creed, that the Messias was to descend naturally from Solomon; and accordingly pronounce a curse upon all those who assert the contrary: though to this very hour they have not been able to assign who was the son of Jeconiah, whom *God wrote childless;* nor to shew any solid reason why, if Jeconiah had any natural issue of his own, the crown and sceptre of Judah came to be devolved upon the line of Nathan, as it actually was in Salathiel and his successors. Add to this, (which is a thing well worth observing,) that although it is frequently said in scripture, that the Messias should descend from David, yet it is never said that he should descend from Solomon. For though in 1 Chron. xxii. 10. it is said of Solomon, that God would *establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever*, yet it is not said that he would establish it in his seed or line; and besides, the kingdom here spoken of and intended, was the spiritual kingdom over the church of God, typified

[a] Note that those four sons of David by Bathsheba, mentioned in 1 Chron. iii. 5. are not there set down according to the order of their birth. For Solomon, though last named, was certainly born first; and Nathan (as he is generally reckoned) immediately next.

in that temporal one of Solomon; which spiritual kingdom was established only in the person of the Messias, whom we believe to have been Jesus of Nazareth, the great king and head of the church, God blessed for ever.

3. The third proposition is this, That the crown of Judah being now come into the line of Nathan in Salathiel, (whose immediate son was Pedaiah, (though not mentioned in the succession, because he died before his father's assumption to the crown,) and next to Salathiel, the great and renowned Zorobabel,) forasmuch as St. Matthew and Luke agree from Jeconiah to Zorobabel; (after whom they divide, each ascribing to him a different successor, *viz.* one of them Abiud, and the other Rhesa;) we are rationally to suppose, that these two were the sons of Zorobabel; and that from Abiud, the elder brother, (who only had right to the crown and kingdom,) lineally descended Joseph, according to the calculation of St. Matthew; and that from Rhesa, the younger brother, descended Mary, of whom Jesus was born, according to St. Luke's description: for though in the above-mentioned third chapter of 1 Chron. (where there is an account given of Zorobabel's sons,) there occur not the names of Abiud and Rhesa; yet it being common with the Jews for one man sometimes to have two names, there is ground enough for us, without any presumption, to believe and conclude that it so happened here.

4. The fourth proposition is this, That it was the custom of the Jews not to reckon the woman by name in her pedigree, but to reckon the husband in right of his wife. For which reason Joseph is twice reckoned, *viz.* first in his own right by St. Matthew;

and secondly in his wife Mary's right by St. Luke. For Mary was properly the daughter of Eli; and Joseph, who is there reckoned after him, is so reckoned, not as his natural son, but as his son-in-law, instead of his wife Mary, according to that custom of the Jews: whereupon it is noted by Chemnitius, that St. Luke doth not say that Joseph was the son of Eli, or Eli begat Joseph, as St. Matthew precisely doth, that Jacob begat Joseph, but τοῦ Ἡλὶ, who was of Eli, that is, was related to him, and belonged to his family, *viz.* as his son-in-law. Nor ought any to object against Mary's being the daughter of Eli, that ancient and received tradition, which reports her the daughter of Joachim and Anna; for, as the learned bishop Mountague observes, Eli and Joachim, however they are two words, (and very different,) are yet but one name, and signify but one person; Eli being but ὑποκοριστικὸν, a diminutive of Eliakim, and Eliakim the same with Jehoiachim or Joachim, as appears from 2 Kings xxiii. 34. and 2 Chron. xxxvi. 4. quoting withal two noted Jewish rabbies[a], *viz.* Macana Ben Nehemiæ, and rabbi Hacadosh, in confirmation of the same, and with particular application of it to the father of the blessed Virgin, there pointed out by them as the mother of the Messias.

5. The fifth and last proposition is this, That although Jesus of Nazareth naturally descended only from Mary, yet he derives not his title to the crown and kingdom of the Jews originally by the line of Mary, (forasmuch as she sprang from the line of Rhesa, the younger son of Zorobabel,) but received that from Joseph, who was of the elder line by Abiud; which line of Abiud failing in Joseph, as having no

[a] Acts and Monuments of the Church, p. 522.

issue, the right of inheritance devolved upon one of the younger line, *viz.* upon Mary, and consequently upon Jesus her son and legal heir. From whence there rises this unanswerable argument, both against the opinion of those who affirm Joseph to have had other children by a former wife; as also against that old heresy of Helvidius, who, against the general and constant sense of the church, denied the perpetual virginity of Mary, affirming that Joseph had other children by her after the birth of Jesus. Spanhemius, in his *Dubia Evangelica*, concludes against the opinion of Helvidius (which I much marvel at) merely upon the account of decency and congruity, as judging it more suitable and agreeable to that honourable esteem we ought to have of our blessed Saviour's mother, to hold that after his birth she remained a perpetual virgin. But I add, that to assert so, seems not only decent, but of as absolute necessity, as that Jesus Christ the Messias was to be of right king of the Jews. For had Joseph had any children, either by Mary or any other wife, they, as coming from the elder line of Abiud by Joseph their father, must have claimed the inheritance of the kingdom in his right, and not Jesus the son of Mary, who descended from a younger line, and so could not legally inherit, but upon default of issue from Joseph, the only remaining heir of the elder: for this was the law of Moses, which in this case would have barred Jesus from a title to the kingdom of the Jews. But we know Jesus came to *fulfil the law* in every part and tittle of it; and therefore would never have owned himself king of the Jews, contrary to the express injunctions and tenor of it. For though it must be confessed that the gospel makes mention

of the brothers and sisters of Jesus, yet it is known to be most usual in the Jewish language to call any collateral kindred, as cousins and cousin-germans, by that name. And antiquity reports the Virgin Mary to have had two sisters, the children of which might very well be called the brethren of Jesus. So that from hence there can be no necessity of granting that Jesus had any brother or sister, either by his mother Mary, or his reputed and legal father Joseph.

And thus I have endeavoured to make out our blessed Saviour's descent from the line of David. But as for that opinion which asserts him to have been of the tribe of Levi, because his mother Mary was cousin to Elizabeth who was of that tribe, it is very weak and groundless. For no man asserts Jesus to have been so of the house of David, as to exclude all relation to other tribes and families, with which by mutual marriages he might well contract a kindred; it being prohibited to none but heiresses to marry out of their own family. And as for another opinion, which (in order to the making of Christ a priest) affirms Nathan the son of David, from whom Christ descended, to have been a priest, as Solomon was a king, and so to have founded a sacerdotal line as Solomon did a royal; this being a conceit both so groundless in itself, and withal so expressly contradicted by the scripture, which in Heb. vii. 13. so positively affirms, that *no man of the tribe of Judah ever gave attendance at the altar*; I say, upon this account it deserves no further thought, and much less confutation.

Now to sum up all that has been delivered, it briefly amounts to thus much, that the royal line of

David by Solomon being extinct in Jeconiah, the crown and kingdom passed into the immediately younger line of Nathan (another son of David) in Salathiel and Zorobabel; which Zorobabel having two sons, Abiud and Rhesa, the royal dignity descended of right upon the line of Abiud, of which Joseph was the last, who marrying the Virgin Mary, which sprung from the line of Rhesa the younger son of Zorobabel, and withal having no issue himself, his right passes into the line of Mary, being the next of kin, and by that means upon Jesus her son. Whereupon he was both naturally the son of David, and also legally the king of the Jews; which latter is accounted to us by St. Matthew, as the former is by St. Luke; who delivers down the pedigree of Mary the mother of Jesus and daughter of Eli: though Joseph her husband only stands there named according to the known way of the Jews computing their genealogies.

And this to me seems a most clear, full, and manifest deduction of our Saviour's pedigree from David, which yet I shall further confirm with this one consideration; that whatsoever cavils the modern Jews and others make nowadays against the genealogies recorded by the evangelists; yet the Jews their contemporaries, who were most nice and exactly skilful in things of this nature, and withal most maliciously bent against Christ and Christianity, never offered to quarrel against or invalidate the accounts they have given us of this particular; which, had they been faulty, the Jews would most certainly have done; this giving them so vast an advantage against us. And this consideration alone, were we now not able particularly to clear these matters, is

of that weight and substance, that, so far as terms of moral certainty can demonstrate a thing, it ought with every sober and judicious person to have even the force of a demonstration. But the discussion which has already passed upon this subject, will afford us ground firm enough for the most rational and impartial belief to stand upon. However, if any one knows some other way of clearing this great article of our faith, which may better accord all difficulties, and lie open to fewer and lesser exceptions, he will do a worthy service to the Christian religion to produce it, and none shall be more thankful to him for it than myself.

Having thus finished the second part of my text, which speaks *Christ the offspring of David*, according to his human nature, as the first declared him the *root of David* in respect of his divine, I shall descend now to that

Third and last part of the text, which represents him to us under the glorious denomination of *the bright and morning star*.

Three things there are considerable in a star.

First, The nature of its substance.

Secondly, The manner of its appearance.

Thirdly, The quality of its operation.

In every one of which respects Christ bears a lively resemblance to it.

First, and first for the nature of its substance. It is commonly defined in philosophy the purest and most refined part of its orb; by which it is distinguished from all those meteors and shining nothings that ascend no further than the air, how high soever the mistake and ignorance of vulgar eyes may place them, as also from the other parts of the celestial

sphere or orb in which it is. In like manner was not Christ the purest and the noblest part of the world, which was the sphere and orb wherein, during his humiliation, he was pleased to move? He was the very flower, the extract and quintessence of mankind, uniting all the perfections of it in his person, without any alloy or mixture of imperfection. Upon which account David, by the spirit of prophecy, calls him *fairer than the sons of men*, as being *anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows:* that is, the graces of the Spirit descended not upon him in those minute portions and stinted measures that they do upon other mortals. Their drop was nothing to his ocean.

And to shew yet further of how pure a make he was, we know him to have been wholly untouched with any thing of that original stain, which has universally sunk into the nature of all men besides. He was a second Adam without any of the guilt contracted by the first; he was born a man without any human imperfections; a rose without thorns. He was nothing but purity itself; virtue clothed in a body, and innocence incarnate. So blameless and free from all shadow of guilt, that the very Jews, his bitter enemies, gave him this testimony, *that he had done all things well;* Mark vii. 37. And even Pilate, his unjust judge, though he took from him his life, yet left him his innocence, declaring openly, *that he found in him no fault at all,* John xviii. 38.

There are spots, they say, not in the moon only, but also in the face of the sun itself: but this star was of a greater and more unblemished lustre; for not the least spot was ever discovered in it; though malice and envy itself were the perspectives through which most of the world beheld it. And as it is the

privilege of the celestial luminaries to receive no tincture, sulliage, or defilement from the most noisome sinks and dunghills here below, but to maintain a pure, untainted, virgin light, in spite of all their exhalations; so our Saviour shined in the world with such an invincible light of holiness, as suffered nothing of the corrupt manners and depraved converse of men to rub the least filth or pollution upon him. He was not capable of receiving any impression from all the sin and villainy which like a contagion fastened upon every soul round about him. In a word, he was pure, righteous, and undefiled, not only above the world, but, what is more, in the midst of it.

Secondly. The next thing considerable in a star is the manner of its appearance. It appears but small, and of a little compass: so that although our reason assures us that it is bigger than the whole earth, yet our sight would seem to persuade us that it is not much bigger than a diamond sparkling upon the circle of a little ring. And now how appositely does this consideration also suit the condition of our Saviour! who both in his rising and shining upon the world seemed in the eyes of all men but a small and a contemptible thing; a poor helpless man; first living upon a trade, and then upon something that was much meaner, namely, upon alms. Whereupon, what slight thoughts had they of his person! as if he had been no more than an ordinary soul, joined to an ordinary body; and so sent into the world to take his course in the common lot of mortality. They little dreamed of a Deity, and of something greater than the world, lodged in that little tabernacle of his flesh. So that notwithstanding his being the great and almighty

God, the Lord of hosts, and King of kings, yet the generality of men took him for but a mean person, and such another living piece of clay as themselves. And what could be the cause of his being thought so, but the same that makes stars to be thought little things, even their height and vast distance from poor earthly spectators? So the glories of Christ's person were by the very transcendency of their height placed above the reach and ken of a mortal apprehension. And God must yet elevate our reason by revelation, or the Son of God himself will still seem but a small thing in our eyes. For carnal reason measures the greatest things by all the disadvantages of their outward appearance, just as little children judge of the proportion of the sun and moon, reckoning that to be the smallness of the object which is only the distance of the beholder, or the weakness of the organ.

Thirdly. The third and last thing to be considered in a star is, the quality of its operation, which is twofold. First, open and visible, by its light. Secondly, secret and invisible, by its influence. And,

First, This morning star operates by its brightness and lustre; in respect of which it is the first fruits of light, and, as it were, day in its minority; clearing the heavenly stage, and chasing away all other stars, till it reigns in the firmament alone. And now to make good the comparison between Christ and this, we shall shew how he by his appearance chased away many things much admired and gazed at by the world, and particularly these three.

First, Much of the heathenish worship and superstition, which not only like a cloud, but like a black and a dark night, had for a long time covered the

face of the whole earth, and made such triumphs over the reason of mankind, that in nothing more appeared the ruins and decays of our nature. And it was unquestionably the greatest and severest instance of the divine wrath upon man for his original apostasy from God, thus to leave him confounded and uncertain in the management of the greatest affair and concernment of his soul, his religion: so that, as it was then ordered, it was nothing else but a strange, confused compound of absurdity and impiety. For as to the object of their worship, the apostle tells us, that they *worshipped devils*, 1 Cor. x. 20. and elsewhere they worshipped *men like themselves*. Nay, *birds* and *beasts*, and *creeping things;* and, as historians tell us, roots and herbs, leeks and onions; yea, and their own base desires and affections; deifying and building temples to lust, anger, revenge, and the like. In sum, they worshipped all things but God, who only of all things was to have been worshipped.

Now upon the coming of Christ, very much, though not all, of this idolatrous trumpery and superstition was driven out of the world: so that many of the oracles (those great instruments of delusion) ceased about the time of our Saviour's nativity. The divine power then dispossessing the devil of his greater temples, as well as of his lesser, the bodies of men; and so casting down the throne of fallacy and superstition, by which he had so long enslaved the vassal world, and led it captive at his pleasure.

Secondly, As the heathenish false worship, so also the Jewish imperfect worship began to be done away by the coming of Christ. The Jews indeed drew

their religion from a purer fountain than the gentiles; God himself being the author of it, and so both ennobling and warranting it with the stamp of divine authority. Yet God was pleased to limit his operations in this particular to the narrowness and small capacities of the subject which he had to deal with; and therefore the Jews, being naturally of a gross and sensual apprehension of things, had the economy of their religion, in many parts of it, brought down to their temper, and were trained to spirituals by the ministry of carnal ordinances. Which yet God was pleased to advance in their signification, by making them types and shadows of that glorious archetype that was to come into the world, his own Son; both in person and office by admirable mystery and contrivance fitted to be the great redeemer of mankind. He therefore being the person to whom all the prophets bore witness, to whom all ceremonies pointed, and whom all the various types prefigured; it was but reason, that, when he actually appeared in the world, all that previous pomp and apparatus should go off the stage, and, like shadows, vanish before the substance. And accordingly we look upon the whole Mosaical institution as having received its period by Christ, as defunct and ceased, and the church now grown up to that virility and stature, as to be above the discipline of beggarly rudiments, and, like an adult heir passing from the pedagogy of tutors, to assume its full liberty and inheritance: for those whom Christ makes free are free indeed.

Thirdly and lastly, All pretended false Messiahs vanished upon the appearance of Christ the true one. A crown will not want pretenders to claim it,

nor usurpers, if their power serves them to possess it: and hereupon the messiahship was pretended to by several impostors: but fallacy and falsehood being naturally weak, they still sunk, and came to nothing. It must be confessed indeed, that there rose up such counterfeits after Christ, as well as before him; yet still, I think, their defeat ought to be ascribed to his coming: because as a light scatters the darkness on all sides of it; so there was such a demonstration and evidence given of Jesus's being the true Messias by his coming in the flesh, that it cast its discovering influence both backwards and forwards; and equally baffled and confuted the pretences of those who went before, and of those who rose up after him: so potent and victorious is truth, especially when it comes upon such an errand from heaven, as to save the world.

Amongst those several false Messias's, it is remarkable that one called himself Barchocab, or the son of a star: but by his fall he quickly shewed himself of a nature far differing from this glorious *morning star* mentioned in the text, which even then was fixed in heaven while it shone upon the earth. It was not the transitory light of a comet, which shines and glares for a while, and then presently vanishes into nothing; but a light durable and immortal, and such an one as shall outlive the sun, and shine and burn when heaven and earth and the whole world shall be reduced to cinders.

Having thus shewn how Christ resembled a star in respect of his external visible shinings to the world, by which he drove away much of the heathenish idolatry, all the Jewish ceremonies, together with the pretences of all counterfeit Messias's, as the

light dispels and chases away the darkness; come we now, in the

Second place, to see how he resembles a star also in respect of its internal, secret operation and influence upon all sublunary inferior beings. And indeed this is the noblest and the greatest part of the resemblance. Stars are thought to operate powerfully even then when they do not appear; and are felt by their effects, when they are not seen by their light. In like manner, Christ often strikes the soul, and darts a secret beam into the heart, without alarming either the eye or ear of the person wrought upon. And this is called, both properly and elegantly, by St. Peter, 2 Ephes. i. 19, *the day star's arising in our hearts;* that is, by the secret silent workings of his Spirit he illuminates the judgment, bends the will and the affections, and at last changes the whole man: and this is that powerful but *still voice* by which he speaks eternal peace to the souls of his elect, in the admirable but mysterious work of their conversion. So that our great concern and inquiry should be, whether those heavenly beams have reached us inwardly, and pierced into our minds, as well as shone in our faces; and whether the influence of this star upon us has been such as to govern and draw us after it, as it did the wise men, and thereby both make and prove us wise unto salvation. For light is operative as well as beautiful, and by working upon the spirits, affects the heart as well as pleases the eye. Above all things, therefore, let us be strict and impartial in this search, where the thing searched for is of such consequence. For since there are false lights, light itself should be tried; and if we would know infallibly whether it

be the light from above, by which we are led and live; and whether this *morning star* has had its full efficacy upon, or rather within us; let us see whether or no it has scattered the clouds and darkness of our spiritual ignorance, and the noisome fogs of our lusts and vile affections. Do we live as the sons of light? Do we walk as in the day, without stumbling into the mire of our old sins? These are the only sure evidences that Christ is not only a star in himself, but such an one also to us. For when the *dayspring from on high visits us* truly and effectually, it first takes us out of these shadows of death, and then guides our feet into the ways of peace.

To which God of his mercy vouchsafe to bring us all; to whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all honour, &c.

Jesus of Nazareth proved the true and only promised Messiah:

IN

A SERMON

PREACHED AT ST. MARY'S IN OXFORD,

BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY,

ON CHRISTMAS-DAY, 1665.

JOHN i. 11.

He came to his own, and his own received him not.

I CANNOT think it directly requisite to the prosecution of these words, (nor will the time allotted for it permit,) to assert and vindicate the foregoing verses from the perverse interpretations of that false pretender to reason, and real subverter of all religion, Socinus; who, in the exposition of this chapter, together with some part of the 8th, (both of them taken from the posthumous papers of his uncle Lelius,) laid the foundation of that great babel of blasphemies, with which he afterwards so amused and pestered the Christian world, and under colour of reforming and refining, forsooth, the best of religions, has employed the utmost of his skill and art to bring men indeed to believe none. And therefore no small cause of grief must it needs be to all pious minds, that such horrid opinions should find so ready a reception and so fatal a welcome in so many parts

of the world as they have done; considering both what they tend to, and whom they come from. For they tend only to give us such a Christ and Saviour, as neither the prophets nor evangelists know nor speak any thing of. And as for their original, if we would trace them up to that, through some of the chief branches of their infamous pedigree, we must carry them a little backward from hence; first to the forementioned Faustus Socinus and his uncle Lelius, and from them to Gentilis, and then to Servetus, and so through a long interval to Mahomet and his sect, and from them to Photinus, and from him to Arius, and from Arius to Paulus Samosatenus, and from him to Ebion and Cerinthus, and from them to Simon Magus, and so in a direct line to the Devil himself: under whose conduct in the several ages of the church these wretches successively have been some of the most notorious opposers of the divinity of our Saviour, and would undoubtedly have overthrown the belief of it in the world, could they by all their arts of wresting, corrupting, and false interpreting the holy text, have brought the scriptures to speak for them; which they could never yet do. And amongst all the scriptures, no one has stood so directly and immovably in their way as this first chapter of St. John's Gospel, a chapter carrying in it so bright and full an assertion of the eternal godhead of the Son, that a man must put common sense and reason extremely upon the rack, before he can give any tolerable exposition of it to the contrary. So that an eminent Dutch critic) who could find in his heart, as much as in him lay, to interpret away that noble and pregnant place of scripture, John viii. 58. *Before Abraham was, I*

am, from being any proof at all of Christ's eternal preexistence to his incarnation, and so to give up one of the main forts of the Christian religion to the Socinians) has yet been forced, by the overpowering evidence of this chapter, (notwithstanding all his shifts, too manifestly shewing what he would be at,) to express himself upon this subject more agreeably to the sense of the catholic church, than in many other places he had done. And well indeed might he, even for shame itself, do so much, when it is certain that he might have done a great deal more. For such a commanding majesty is there in every period almost of this chapter, that it has forced even heathens and atheists (persons who valued themselves not a little upon their philosophy) to submit to the controlling truth of the propositions here delivered, and, instead of contradicting or disputing, to fall down and worship. For the things here uttered were mysteries kept hid from ages, and such as God had for four thousand years together, by all the wise arts and methods of his providence, been preparing the world for, before it could be fit or ripe to receive them: and therefore a most worthy subject they must needs have been for this beloved apostle to impart to mankind, who, having so long lain in the bosom of truth itself, received all things from that great original by more intimate and immediate communications than any of the rest of the apostles were honoured with. In a word, he was of the cabinet; and therefore no wonder if he spake oracles.

In the text we have these two parts.

First, Christ's coming into the world, in those words, *he came to his own.*

Secondly, Christ's entertainment, being come, in those other words, *his own received him not.*

In the former of which there being an account given us of one of the greatest and most stupendous actions that the world was ever yet witness of; there cannot, I suppose, be a truer measure taken of the nature of it, than by a distinct consideration of the several circumstances belonging to it, which are these.

First, The person who came.

Secondly, The condition from which he came.

Thirdly, The persons to whom he came. And,

Fourthly and lastly, The time of his coming.

Of all which in their order. And,

1. First for the person who came. It was the second Person in the glorious Trinity, the ever blessed and eternal Son of God, concerning whom it is a miracle, and a kind of paradox to our reason, (considering the condition of his person,) how he could be said to come at all: for since all coming is motion or progression from a place in which we were, to a place in which we were not before; and since infinity implies an actual comprehension of, and a presence to, all places, it is hard to conceive how he who was God could be said to come any whither, whose infinity had made all progression to, or acquisition of a new place impossible. But Christ, who delighted to mingle every mercy with miracle and wonder, took a finite nature into the society and union of his person; whereupon what was impossible to a divine nature was rendered very possible to a divine person; which could rightfully and properly entitle itself to all the respective actions and properties of either nature comprehended within its

personality: so that being made man, he could do all things that man could do, except only sin. Every thing that was purely human, and had nothing of any sinful deficiency or turpitude cleaving to it, fell within the verge and compass of his actions. But now, was there ever any wonder comparable to this; to behold divinity thus clothed in flesh! the Creator of all things humbled, not only to the company, but also to the cognation of his creatures! It is as if we should imagine the whole world not only represented upon, but also contained in one of our little artificial globes; or the body of the sun enveloped in a cloud as big as a man's hand; all which would be looked upon as astonishing impossibilities; and yet as short of the other, as the greatest finite is of an infinite, between which the disparity is immeasurable. For that God should thus in a manner transform himself, and subdue and master all his glories to a possibility of human apprehension and converse, the best reason would have thought it such a thing as God could not do, had it not seen it actually done. It is, as it were, to cancel the essential distances of things, to remove the bounds of nature, to bring heaven and earth, and, what is more, both ends of the contradiction together.

And thereupon some, who think it an imputation upon their reason to believe any thing but what they can demonstrate, (which is no thanks to them at all,) have invented several strange hypotheses and salvos to clear up these things to their apprehensions: as, that the divine nature was never personally united to the human, but only passed through it in a kind of imaginary, phantastic way; that is, to speak plainly, in some way or other, which neither

scripture, sense, nor reason know any thing of. And others have by one bold stroke cut off all such relation of it to the divine nature, and in much another sense than that of the Psalmist, made Christ *altogether such an one as themselves*, that is, a mere man; ψιλὸς ἄνθρωπος: for Socinus would needs be as good a man as his Saviour.

But this opinion, whatsoever ground it may have got in this latter age of the church, yet no sooner was it vented and defended by Photinus, bishop of Sirmium, but it was immediately crushed, and universally rejected by the church: so that although several other heresies had their course, and were but at length extinguished, and not without some difficulty, yet this, like an indigested meteor, appeared and disappeared almost at the same time. However, Socinus beginning where Photinus had long before left off, licked up his deserted forlorn opinion, and lighting upon worse times, has found much better success.

But is it true that Christ came into the world? Then sure I am apt to think that this is a solid inference, that he had an existence and a being before he came hither; since every motion or passage from one place or condition to another, supposes the thing or person so moving to have actually existed under both terms; to wit, as well under that from which, as that to which he passes. But if Christ had nothing but an human nature, which never existed till it was in the world, how could that possibly be said to come into the world? The fruit that grows upon a tree, and so had the first moment of its existence there, cannot with any propriety or truth of speech be said to have come to that tree, since that must

suppose it to have been somewhere else before. I am far from building so great and so concerning a truth merely upon the stress of this way of expression; yet till the reasoning grounded upon it be disproved, I suppose it is not therefore to be despised, though it may be seconded with much better.

But the men whom we contend with, seem hugely injurious to him, whom they call their Saviour, while they even crucify him in his divinity, which the Jews could never do; making his very kindness an argument against his prerogative. For his condescending to be a man makes them infer that he is no more; and faith must stop here, because sight can go no further. But if a prince shall deign to be familiar, and to converse with those upon whom he might trample, shall his condescension therefore unking him, and his familiarity rob him of his royalty? The case is the same with Christ. Men cannot persuade themselves that a Deity and infinity should lie within so narrow a compass as the contemptible dimensions of an human body: that omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence should be ever wrapt in swaddling clothes, and abased to the homely usages of a stable and a manger: that the glorious artificer of the whole universe, *who spread out the heavens like a curtain, and laid the foundations of the earth,* could ever turn carpenter, and exercise an inglorious trade in a little cell. They cannot imagine, that *He who commands the cattle upon a thousand hills, and takes up the ocean in the hollow of his hand,* could be subject to the meannesses of hunger and thirst, and be afflicted in all his appetites: that he who once created, and at present governs, and shall hereafter

judge the world, should be abused in all his concerns and relations, be scourged, spit upon, mocked, and at last crucified. All which are passages which lie extremely cross to the notions and conceptions that reason has framed to itself of that high and impassible perfection that resides in the divine nature. For it is natural to men to be very hardly brought to judge things to be any more than what they appear; and it is also as natural to them to measure all appearances by sense, or at the furthest by reason; though neither of them is a competent judge of the things which we are here discoursing of.

2. The second thing to be considered is the state or condition from which Christ came; and that was from the bosom of his Father, from the incomprehensible, surpassing glories of the godhead, from an eternal enjoyment of an absolute, uninterrupted bliss and pleasure, in the mutual, ineffable intercourses between him and his Father. The heaven of heavens was his habitation, and legions of cherubims and seraphims his humble and constant attendants. Yet he was pleased to disrobe himself of all this magnificence, to lay aside his sceptres and his glories, and, in a word, to *empty himself* as far as the essential fulness of the Deity could be capable of such a dispensation.

And now, if by the poor measures and proportions of a man we may take an estimate of this great action, we shall quickly find how irksome it is to flesh and blood to have been happy, to descend some steps lower, to exchange the estate of a prince for that of a peasant, and to view our happiness only by the help of memory and long reflections. For how hard a task must obedience needs be to a spirit

accustomed to rule and to dominion! How uneasy must the leather and the frieze sit upon the shoulder that used to shine with the purple and the ermine! All change must be grievous to an estate of absolute, entire, unmingled happiness; but then to change to the lowest pitch, and that at first, without inuring the mind to the burden by gradual, intermediate lessenings and declensions, this is the sharpest and most afflicting calamity that human nature can be capable of. And yet what is all this to Christ's humiliation? He who tumbles from a tower, surely has a greater blow than he who slides from a molehill. And we may as well compare the falling of a crumb from the table to the falling of a star from the firmament, as think the abasement of an Alexander from his imperial throne, and from the head of all the Persian and Macedonian greatness, to the condition of the meanest scullion that followed his camp, any ways comparable to the descension of him who was *the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person;* to the condition of a man, much less of a servant and a crucified malefactor. For so was Christ treated: this was the strange leap that he made from the greatest height to the lowest bottom: concerning which it might be well pronounced the greatest wonder in the world, that he should be able so far to humble himself, were it not yet a greater that he could be willing. And thus much for the second circumstance.

3. The third is, the persons to whom he came, expressed by that endearing term *his own;* and this in a more peculiar, advanced sense of propriety. For all the nations of the world were his own by

creation, and, what is consequent to it, by the right of possession and absolute dominion; but the Jews were his own by a fraternal right of consanguinity. He was pleased to derive his humanity from the same stock, to give them the honour of being able to call the God of heaven and the Saviour of the world their brother.

They were *his own* also by the right of churchship, as selected and enclosed by God from amidst all other nations, to be the seat of his worship, and the great conservatory of all the sacred oracles and means of salvation. The gentiles might be called God's own, as a man calls his hall or his parlour his own, which yet others pass through and make use of; but the Jews were so, as a man accounts his closet or his cabinet his own; that is, by a peculiar, uncommunicable destination of it to his own use.

Those who have that hardy curiosity, as to examine the reason of God's actions, (which men of reason should still suppose,) wonder that, since the design of Christ's coming was universal, and extending to all mankind, he should address himself to so inconsiderable a spot of the world as that of Palestine, confining the scene of all his life and actions to such a small handful of men; whereas it would have seemed much more suitable to the purposes of his coming, to have made Rome, at that time the metropolis of the western world, and holding an intercourse with all nations, the place of his nativity and abode: as when a prince would promulge a law, because he cannot with any convenience do it in all places, therefore he does it in the most eminent and conspicuous. To which argument, frequently urged by the enemies of Christianity, he who would

seek for a satisfactory answer from any thing but the absoluteness of God's sovereignty, will find himself defeated in his attempt. It was the mere result of the divine good pleasure, that the fountain of life should derive a blessing to all nations, from so narrow and contemptible an head.

And here I cannot but think it observable, that all the passages of the whole work of man's redemption carry in them the marks, not only of mercy, but of mercy acting by an unaccountable sovereignty: and that for this very reason, as may be supposed, to convince the world that it was purely mercy on God's part, without any thing of merit on man's, that did all. For when God reveals a Saviour to some few, but denies him to more; sends him to a people despised, but passes over nations victorious, honourable, and renowned; he thereby gives the world to know, that his own will is the reason of his proceedings. For it is worth remarking, that there is nothing that befalls men equally and alike, but they are prone to ascribe it either to nature or merit. But where the plea of the receivers is equal, and yet the dispensation of the benefits vastly unequal, there men are taught, that the thing received is grace; and that they have no claim to it, but the courtesy of the dispenser, and the largess of heaven; which cannot be questioned, because it waters my field, while it scorches and dries up my neighbour's. If the sun is pleased to shine upon a turf, and to gild a dunghill, when perhaps he never looks into the bedchamber of a prince, we cannot yet accuse him for partiality: that short, but most significant saying in the evangelist, *May I not do*

what I will with my own? Matt. xx. 15. being a full and solid answer to all such objections.

4. The fourth and last circumstance of Christ's coming related to the time of it: he came to the Jews, when they were in their lowest and worst condition, and that in a double respect, national and ecclesiastical.

1. And first upon a civil or national account. It was not then with them as in those triumphant days of Solomon, when for plenty, riches, and grandeur, they had little cause either to make friends or to fear enemies, but shone as the envy and terror of all the surrounding neighbourhood. At the best now they were but a remnant, and a piece of an often scattered, conquered, and captivated nation: but two tribes of twelve, and those under the Roman yoke, tributary and oppressed, and void of any other privilege but only to obey, and to be fleeced quietly by whosoever was appointed their governor. This was their condition: and could there be any inducement, upon the common principles and methods of kindness, to visit them in that estate? which could be nothing else but only to share with them in servitude, and to bear a part in their oppression.

The measure of men's kindness and visits bestowed upon one another, is usually the prosperity, the greatness, and the interest of the persons whom they visit; that is, because their favour is profitable, and their ill-will formidable; in a word, men visit others because they are kind to themselves. But who ever saw coaches and liveries thronging at the door of the orphan or the widow, (unless peradventure a rich one,) or before the house or prison of an

afflicted, decayed friend? No, at such a time we account them not so much as our own; that unfriends and unbrothers, and dissolves all relations, and it is seldom the dialect of *my good friend*, any longer than it is *my great friend*.

But it was another sort of love that warmed the breast of our Saviour. He visits his kindred, nay, he makes them so in the lowest ebb of all their outward enjoyments, when to be a Jew was a name of disgrace, and to be circumcised a mark of infamy: so that they might very well be a *peculiar people*, not only because God separated them from all other nations, but because all other nations separated themselves from them.

Secondly. Consider them upon an ecclesiastical account, and so we shall find them as corrupted for a church, as they were despised for a nation. Even in the days of the prophet Isaiah, chap. i. 21, it was his complaint, *that the faithful city was become an harlot;* that is, notable for two things, as harlots usually are, paint and impurity. Which growing corruption, in all the intervening time, from thence to the coming of Christ, received a proportionable improvement: so that their teachers, and most seraphic adored doctors of the law, were still ranked with hypocrites. For the text of Moses was used only to authorize a false comment, and to warrant the impiety of a perverse interpretation. Still for all their villainies and hypocrisies they borrowed a veil from Moses; and his name was quoted and pretended as a glorious expedient to countenance and varnish over well contrived corruptions: nay, and they proceeded so high, that those who vouched the authority of Moses most, denied the being of immate-

rial substances, and the immortality of the soul, in which is wrapt up the very spirit and vital breath of all religions: and these men had formed themselves into a standing and considerable sect called the Sadducees; so considerable, that one of them once stepped into the high priesthood: so that whether you look upon the Sadducees or the Pharisees, they had brought the Jewish church to that pass, that they *established iniquity by a law*, or which is worse, turned the law itself into iniquity.

Now the state of things being thus amongst the Jews at the time of Christ's coming, it eminently offers to us the consideration of these two things.

First, The invincible strength of Christ's love, that it should come leaping over such mountains of opposition, that it should triumph over so much Jewish baseness and villainy, and be gracious even in spite of malice itself. It did not knock at, but even break open their doors. Blessing and happiness was in a manner thrust upon them. Heaven would have took them by force, as they should have took heaven: so that they were fain to take pains to rid themselves of their happiness, and it cost them labour and violence to become miserable.

Secondly, It declares to us the immovable veracity of God's promise. For surely, if any thing could reverse a promise, and untie the bands of a decree, it would have been that uncontrolled impiety which then reigned in the Jewish church, and that to such a degree, that the temple itself was profaned into a den of thieves, a rendezvous of hagglers and drovers, and a place not for the sacrificing, but for the selling of sheep and oxen. So that God might well have forgot his promise to his people, when

they had altered the very subject of the promise, and as much as in them lay had ceased to be his people.

We have here finished the first part of the text, and took an account of Christ's *coming to his own*, and his coming through so many obstacles: may we not therefore now expect to see him find a magnificent reception, and a welcome as extraordinary as his kindness? For where should any one expect a welcome, if not coming to his own? And coming also not to charge, but to enrich them; not to share what they had, but to recover what they had lost; and, in a word, to change their temporals into eternals, and bring an overflowing performance and fruition to those who had lived hitherto only upon promise and expectation; but it fell out much otherwise, *his own received him not.*

Nor indeed if we look further into the world shall we find this usage so very strange or wonderful. For kindred is not friendship, but only an opportunity of nearer converse, which is the true cause of, and natural inducement to it. It is not to have the same blood in one's veins, to have lain in the same womb, or to bend the knee to the same father, but to have the same inclinations, the same affections, and the same soul, that makes the friend. Otherwise Jacob may supplant Esau, and Esau hate and design the death of Jacob. And we constantly see the grand seignior's coronation purple dipped in the blood of his murdered brethren, sacrificed to reason of state, or at least to his own unreasonable fears and suspicions: but friends strive not who shall kill, but who shall die first. If then the love of kindred is so small, surely the love of countrymen and neighbours can

promise but little more. A prophet may, without the help of his prophetic spirit, foresee that he shall have but *little honour in his own country.* Men naturally malign the greatness or virtue of a fellow-citizen or a domestic; they think the nearness of it upbraids and obscures them: it is a trouble to have the sun still shining in their faces.

And therefore the Jews in this followed but the common practice of men, whose emulation usually preys upon the next superior in the same family, company, or profession. The bitterest and the loudest scolding is for the most part amongst those of the same street. In short, there is a kind of ill disposition in most men, much resembling that of dogs; they bark at what is high and remote from them, and bite what is next.

Now, in this second part of the text, in which is represented the entertainment which Christ found in the world, expressed to us by those words, *his own received him not,* we shall consider these three things.

1. The grounds upon which the Jews rejected Christ.

2. The unreasonableness of those grounds. And,

3. The great arguments that they had to the contrary.

As to the first of these. To reckon up all the pretences that the Jews allege for their not acknowledging of Christ, would be as endless as the tales and fooleries of their rabbies; a sort of men noted for nothing more than two very ill qualities, to wit, that they are still given to invent and write lies, and those such unlikely and incredible lies, that none can believe them but such as write them. But the

exceptions which seem to carry most of reason and argument with them, are these two.

First, That Christ came not as a temporal prince.

Secondly, That they looked upon him as an underminer and a destroyer of the law of Moses.

1. As for the first. It was a persuasion which had sunk into their very veins and marrow; a persuasion which they built upon as the grand fundamental article of all their creed, that their Messiah should be a temporal prince, nor can any thing beat their posterity out of it to this day. They fancied nothing but triumphs and trophies, and all the nations of the earth licking the dust before them under the victorious conduct of their Messiah: they expected such an one as should disenslave them from the Roman yoke; make the senate stoop to their sanhedrim; and the capitol do homage to their temple. Nay, and we find the disciples themselves leavened with the same conceit: their minds still ran upon the grandeurs of an earthly sovereignty, upon *sitting at Christ's right and left hand in his kingdom,* banqueting and making merry at his table, and who should have the greatest office and place under him. So carnal were the thoughts even of those who owned Christ for the Messiah; but how much more of the rest of the Jews, who contemned and hated him to the same degree! So that while they were feeding themselves with such fancies and expectations, how can we suppose that they would receive a person bearing himself for the Messiah, and yet in the poor habit and profession of a mean mechanic, as also preaching to them nothing but humility, self-denial, and a contempt of those glories and temporal felicities, the enjoyment of which they had

made the very design of their religion? Surely the frustration of their hopes, and the huge contrariety of these things to their beloved preconceived notions, could not but enrage them to the greatest disdain and rejection of his person and doctrine imaginable.

And accordingly it did so: for they scorned, persecuted, and even spat upon him, long before his crucifixion; and no doubt, between rage and derision, a thousand flouts were thrown at him: as, What! shall we receive a threadbare Messiah, a fellow fitter to wield a saw or an hatchet, than a sceptre? For *is not this the carpenter's son?* and have we not seen him in his shop and his cottage amongst his pitiful kindred? And can such an one be a fit person to step into the throne of David, to redeem Israel, and to cope with all the Roman power? No, it is absurd, unreasonable, and impossible: and to be in bondage to the Romans is nobler than to be freed by the hand of such a deliverer.

2. Their other grand exception against him was, that he set himself against the law of Moses, their reverence to which was so sacred, that they judged it the unchangeable rule of all human actions; and that their Messiah at his coming was to impose the observation of it upon all nations, and so to establish it for ever: nay, and they had an equal reverence for all the parts of it, as well the judicial and ceremonial as the moral; and (being naturally of a gross and a thick conception of things) perhaps a much greater. For still we shall find them more zealous in *tything mint, and rue, and cummin, and washing pots and platters*, (where chiefly their mind was,) than in the prime duties of mercy and justice. And as for their beloved sabbath, they placed the

celebration of it more in doing nothing, than in doing good; and rather in sitting still, than in rescuing a life, or saving a soul: so that when Christ came to interpret and reduce the moral law to its inward vigour and spirituality, they, whose soul was of so gross a make that it was scarce a spirit, presently defied him as a Samaritan and an impostor, and would by no means hear of such strange impracticable notions. But when from refining and correcting their expositions and sense of the moral law, he proceeded also to foretell and declare the approaching destruction of their temple, and therewith a period to be put to all their rites and ceremonies, they grew impatient, and could hold no longer, but sought to kill him, and thereby thought that they did God good service, and Moses too. So wonderfully, it seems, were these men concerned for God's honour, that they had no way to shew it, but by rejecting his Son out of deference to his servant.

We have seen here the two great exceptions which so blocked up the minds and hearts of the Jewish nation against Jesus Christ their true Messiah, that when *he came to his own, his own* rejected and threw him off. I come now in the next place,

2. To shew the weakness and unreasonableness of these exceptions. And,

First, For Christ's being a temporal monarch, who should subdue and bring all nations under the Jewish sceptre. I answer, that it was so far from necessary, that it was absolutely impossible, that the Messiah should be such an one, and that upon the account of a double supposition, neither of which, I conceive, will be denied by the Jews themselves.

1. The first is the professed design of his coming,

which was to be a blessing to all nations: for it is over and over declared in scripture, that *in the seed of Abraham*, that is, in the Messiah, *all nations of the earth should be blessed.* But now if they mean this of a temporal blessing, as I am sure they intend no other, then I demand how this can agree with his being such a prince, as, according to their description, must conquer all people, and enslave them to the Jews, as *hewers of wood and drawers of water*, as their vassals and tributaries, and, in a word, liable upon all occasions to be insulted over by the worst conditioned people in the world? A worthy blessing indeed, and such an one as, I believe, few nations would desire to be beholden to the seed of Abraham for. For there is no nation or people that can need the coming of a Messiah to bless them in this manner: since they may bless themselves so whensoever they please; if they will but send messengers to some of their neighbours, wiser and powerfuller than themselves, and declare their estates and country at their service, provided they will but come and make them slaves without calling them so; by sending armies to take possession of their forts and garrisons, to seize their lands, monies, and whatsoever else they have; and, in a word, to oppress, beggar, and squeeze them as dry as a pumice, and then trample upon them because they can get no more out of them: let any people, I say, as they shall like this, apply to some potent, overgrown prince, (whom the fools, his neighbours, shall have made so,) and I dare undertake, that upon a word speaking, they shall find him ready to be such a Messias to them at any time. And yet this was all that the gentile world could gain by

those magnificent promises of the Messiah, (as universal a blessing as the prophets had foretold he should be,) if the Jews' opinion concerning the nature of his kingdom over the rest of the world should take place. But since they judge such a kind of government so great a blessing to mankind, it is pity but they should have a large and lasting enjoyment of it themselves, and be made to feel what it is to be peeled and polled, fleeced and flayed, taxed and trod upon by the several governments they should happen to fall under; and so find the same usage from other princes which they had so liberally designed for them, under their supposed Messiah: as indeed through the just judgment of God they have in a great measure found ever since the crucifixion of Christ.

Second. The other supposition upon which I disprove the Messiah's being such a temporal prince, is the unquestionable truth of all the prophecies recorded of him in scripture; many of which declare only his sufferings, his humility, his low despised estate; and so are utterly incompatible with such a princely condition. Those two, the first, Psalm xxii. the other in Isaiah liii. are sufficient proofs of this. It is not to be denied, indeed, that several have attempted to make them have no respect at all to the Messiah; but still the truth has been superior to all such attempts. The Jewish rabbies for the most part understand them of the whole body of the people of Israel: and [a] one we know amongst our Christian interpreters, (though it will be hard to *christen* his interpretation,) who will needs have this whole fifty-third chapter of Isaiah to relate only to

[a] See more of this in the following discourse on Isaiah liii. 8.

the prophet Jeremy, in the first and historical sense of it: little certainly to the service of Christianity; unless we can think the properest way for confirming our faith (especially against its mortal adversaries the Jews) be to strip it of the chief supports which the Old Testament affords it. But every little fetch of wit and criticism must not think to bear down the whole stream of Christian, catholic interpreters; and much less the apparent force and evidence of so clear a prophecy.

And therefore to return to the rabbies themselves, the most learned of them, after all such fruitless attempts, understand those prophecies only of the Messiah: but then, being fond of his temporal reign and greatness, some of them have invented the σοφὸν φάρμακον of two several Messiahs, Messiah Ben David, and Messiah Ben Joseph: one whereof was to be potent and victorious, the other low, afflicted, and at length killed. A bold unheard of fiction, and never known to the ancient Jewish church, till the modern rabbies began to dote and blaspheme at all adventures. But there is no shift so senseless and groundless which an obstinate adherence to a desperate cause will not drive the defenders of it to. It is clear, therefore, that all the pretences which the Jews have for the temporal reign and greatness of their Messiah, is sufficiently answered and cut off by these two considerations: for to argue with them further from the spirituality of the Messiah's kingdom, as that the end of it was to abstract from all carnal, earthly, sensual enjoyments, as the certain hinderers of piety, and underminers of the spirit, would be but a begging of the question, as to the Jews, who would contend as positively that this was

not to be the intent of it. And besides the truth is, their principles and temper are so hugely estranged from such considerations, that a man might as well read a lecture of music or astronomy to an ox or an ass, as go about to persuade them that their Messiah was only to plant his kingdom in men's hearts, and by infusing into them the graces of humility, temperance, and heavenly-mindedness, to conquer their corruptions, and reign over their carnal affections, which they had a great deal rather should reign over them. And thus much for answer to their first exception.

Secondly. I come now to shew the unreasonableness of the other, grounded upon a pretence, that Christ was a supplanter of the authority of Moses, and an enemy to the law. And here for answer to this, I grant that Christ designed the abrogation of their ceremonial law, and yet for all this I affirm that Christ made good that word of his to the utmost, *that he came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it.* For we must know, that to destroy a constitution, and to abrogate, or merely to put an end to it, are very different. To destroy a thing, is to cause it to cease from that use to which it is designed, and to which it ought to serve: but so did not Christ to the ceremonial law; the design of which was to fore-signify and point at the Messiah who was to come. So that the Messiah being come, and having finished the work for which he came, the use of it continued no longer; for being only to relate to a thing future, when that thing was past, and so ceased to be future, the relation, surely, grounded upon that futurity, must needs cease also. In a word, if to fulfil a prophecy be to destroy it, then Christ by abrogating the ceremonial law may be

said also to have destroyed it. A prophecy fulfilled is no longer a prophecy; the very subject-matter of it being hereby took away; so a type is no longer a type, when the thing typified comes to be actually exhibited. But the Jews, who stripped all these things from any relation to a spiritual design, thought that their temple was to stand for ever; their circumcision and sabbaths to be perpetual, their new-moons never to change, and the difference of meats and of clean and unclean beasts to be unalterable. For alas, poor ignorant wretches! all their religion (as they had made it) was only to hate hogs, and to butcher sheep and oxen. A religion which they might very well have practised, had they sacrificed to no other god but their belly. Having thus shewn the unreasonableness of the Jews' exceptions against Christ, I come now to

The third and last thing, which is to shew, that they had great reason for the contrary, high arguments to induce them to receive and embrace him for their Messias. It is not the business of an hour, nor of a day, to draw forth all those reasons which make for this purpose, and to urge them according to their full latitude and dignity: and therefore being to speak to those, who need not be convinced of that which they believe already, I shall mention but two, and those very briefly.

1. The first shall be taken from this; that all the signs and marks of the Messias did most eminently appear in Christ: of all which signs I shall fix upon one as the most notable, which is the time of his coming. It was exactly when the sceptre, or government, was departed from Judah, according to that prophecy of Jacob: and at the end of Daniel's

weeks; at which time he foretold that the Messiah should come. Upon a consideration of which one of their own rabbies, but fifty years before Christ, said, that it was impossible for the coming of the Messiah to be deferred beyond fifty years: a proportion of time vastly different from that of above sixteen hundred, and yet after this also they can hear no news of such a Messiah as they expect. The same Daniel also affirms, that after the coming and cutting off of the Messiah, the city and the temple should be destroyed: as clear therefore as it is, that the city and temple are destroyed, so clear is it that their Messiah came before that destruction. From all which we may well insist upon that charge made against them by our Saviour, *Ye fools, ye can discern the face of the sky, and of the heavens, but how is it that ye do not discern this time?* A time as evident as if it were pointed out by a sunbeam upon a dial. And therefore the modern Jews being pinched with the force of this argument, fly to their old stale evasion, that the promise of the time of the Messiah's coming was not absolute but conditional; which condition failing upon the great sins of the Jews, the time of his coming has been accordingly deferred. But this answer signifies nothing: for the very design of the Messiah's coming, was to take away sins and be a propitiation for them, even according to their own rabbies' words and confession: and therefore it is ridiculous to make the Jews' sins the hinderances of his coming, when he made the atonement of sins the chief reason why he should come. In a word, if the Messiah was to come within such a certain period of time, (which time is long since expired,) and while the city and temple were

yet standing, which shortly after Christ's coming were demolished; then either that Jesus was the Messiah, or let them shew some other about that time, to whom that title might better belong.

2. A second reason shall be taken from the whole course and tenor of Christ's behaviour amongst the Jews. Every miracle that he did was an act of mercy and charity, and designed to cure as well as to convince. *He went about doing good;* he conversed amongst them like a walking balsam, breathing health and recovery wheresoever he came. Shew me so much as one miracle ever wrought by him to make a man lame or blind, to incommode an enemy, or to revenge himself; or shew me any one done by him to serve an earthly interest. As for gain and gold he renounced it. Poverty was his fee, and the only recompence of all his cures: and had he not been sold till he sold himself, the high priests might have kept their thirty pieces of silver for a better use. Nor was fame and honour the bait that allured him: for he despised a kingship, and regarded not their hosannahs. He embraced a *cross*, and declined *not the shame*. And as for pleasure and softness of life, he was so far from the least approach to it, that *he had not where to lay his head*, while the foxes of the world had very warm places where to lay theirs. He lived as well as wrought miracles. Miracles of austerity, fasting, and praying, long journeys, and coarse receptions; so that if we compare his doctrine with his example, his very precepts were dispensations and indulgences, in comparison of the rigours he imposed upon himself.

Let the Jews, therefore, who shall except against Christ as an impostor, (as they all do,) declare what

carnal or secular interest he drove at; and if not, what there is in the nature of man, that can prompt him to an endurance of all these hardships; to serve no temporal end or advantage whatsoever. For did ever any sober person toil and labour, and at length expose himself to a cruel death, only to make men believe that which he neither did nor could believe himself? And so by dying in and for a lie, must procure himself damnation in the next world, as well as destruction in this? But if, for all this, they will still make Christ a deceiver, they must introduce upon mankind new principles of acting, cancel and overturn the old acknowledged methods of nature; and, in a word, either affirm that Christ was not a man, or that he was influenced by ends and inclinations contrary to all the rest of mankind: one of which must unavoidably follow; but neither of them ought to be admitted, where sense or reason is so much as pretended to.

And thus I have at length finished what I first proposed to be discoursed of from these words, *He came to his own, and his own received him not.* In which, that men may not run themselves into a dangerous mistake, by thinking the Jews the only persons concerned in these words, and consequently that the guilt here charged upon them could affect none else; we must know, that although upon the score of the natural cognation between Christ and the Jews, the text calls them by that appropriating character *his own*, and accordingly speaks of his coming to them as such; yet that all the nations of the world, who have had the gospel preached unto them, are as really his own, as any of the race of Abraham could be, (if those may be called his own whom he had so dearly

bought,) and consequently that we are as capable of having Christ come to us, as the Jews themselves were. And accordingly he actually has, and every day does come to us; not in the same manner, indeed, but to the same purpose; not in the form of a servant, but with the majesty of a Saviour; that is to say, he comes to us in his word, in his sacraments, and in all the benefits of his incarnation; and those exhibited to us with as much reality and effect, as if with our very eyes we beheld the person of our benefactor. And then on the other hand, as we are altogether as capable of his coming to us, as his kindred and contemporaries the Jews themselves were; so are we likewise as capable of not receiving him, as those wretches were or could be. And therefore let no man flatter himself with reference to Christ, as the Jews, in much the like case, did with reference to the old prophets; boasting, forsooth, *that had they lived in the days of their fathers, they would have had no hand in the blood of those holy messengers of God,* Matt. xxiii. 30. Let no vicious person, I say, though never so noted and professed a Christian, conclude from hence, that had he lived when and where our Saviour did, nothing could have induced him to use him as those miscreants had done. For though I know that such men (as bad as they are) do with great confidence aver all this, and think themselves in very good earnest while they do so; yet as, in general, he who thinks he cannot deceive himself does not sufficiently know himself; so in this particular case, every hypocrite or wicked liver professing Christianity, while he thinks and speaks in this manner, is really imposing upon himself by a false persuasion; and

would (though he may not know so much) have borne the very same malignity towards our Saviour, which those Jews are recorded to have done; and under the same circumstances would have infallibly treated him with the same barbarity. For, why did the Jews themselves use him so? Why? because the doctrines he preached to them were directly contrary to their lusts and corrupt affections, and defeated their expectations of a worldly Messias, who should have answered their sensual desires with the plenties and glories of such an earthly kingdom, as they had wholly set their gross hearts and souls upon. Accordingly, let us now but shift the scene, and suppose Christ in person preaching the same doctrines amongst us, and withal as much hated and run down for an impostor by the whole national power, civil and ecclesiastical, as it then fared with him amongst the Jews; and then no doubt we should see all such vicious persons, finding themselves pricked and galled with his severe precepts, quickly fall in with the stream of public vogue and authority, and as eagerly set *for* the taking away his life, as *against* reforming their own. To which we may further add this, that our Saviour himself passes the very same estimate upon every such wicked professor of his gospel, which he then did upon the Jews themselves, in that his irrefragable expostulation with them, *Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I command you?* Luke vi. 46. implying thereby, that this was the greatest hostility and affront that men could possibly pass upon him. And no doubt but the Jews themselves, who avowedly rejected Christ, and his doctrine, out of an almost invincible prejudice in-

fused into them by their teachers and rulers, concerning the utter inconsistency of both with the Mosaic constitution, were much more excusable before God, than any Christians can be, who, acknowledging the divine authority both of his person and his gospel, do yet reverse and contradict that in their lives and actions, which they avow in their creeds and solemn declarations. For he who prefers a base pleasure or profit before Christ, *spits in his face*, as much as the Jews did: and he who debauches his immortal soul, and prostitutes it to the vile and low services of lust and sensuality, *crucifies his Saviour afresh*, and puts him *to as open a shame* as ever Pontius Pilate, the high priest, or those mercenary tools, the very soldiers themselves, did. They do not indeed *pierce his side*, but (what is worse) they strike a dagger into his heart.

And now, if the passing of all these indignities upon one who came into the world only to save it, (and to redeem those very persons who used him so,) is not able to work upon our ingenuity, should not the consequences of it at least work upon our fears, and make us consider, whether, as we affect to sin like the Jews, it may not be our doom to suffer like the Jews too? To which purpose, let us but represent to ourselves the woful estate of Jerusalem, bleeding under the rage and rapine of the Roman armies; together with that face of horror and confusion which then sat upon that wretched people, when the casting off their Messias had turned their advocate into their judge, their saviour into their enemy; and, by a long refusal of his mercy, made them ripe for the utmost executions of his justice. After which proceeding of the divine venge-

ance against such sinners, should it not (one would think) be both the interest and wisdom of the stoutest and most daring sinners in the world, forthwith to make peace with their Redeemer upon his own terms? and (as hard a lesson as it seems) to take his yoke upon their necks, rather than with the Jews to draw his blood upon their heads; especially since one of the two must and will assuredly be their case? for the methods of grace are fixed, and the measures stated: and as little allowance of mercy will be made to such Christians as reject Christ in his laws, as to those very Jews who nailed him to the cross.

In fine, Christ comes to us in his ordinances, with life in one hand, and death in the other. To such as *receive him not*, he brings the *abiding wrath of God*, a present curse, and a future damnation: but *to as many as shall receive him*, (according to the expression immediately after the text,) *he gives power to become the sons of God.* That is, in other words, to be as happy, both in this world and the next, as infinite goodness acting by infinite wisdom can make them.

To him therefore, who alone can do such great things for those who serve him, be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

A SERMON

PREACHED ON GOOD FRIDAY,

AT

CHRIST-CHURCH, OXON,

BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY,

MARCH 20, 1668.

ISAIAH liii. 8.

——*For the transgression of my people was he stricken.*

THIS great and eloquent prophet, the evangelist of the Jewish church, (as without any impropriety he may be called,) from ver. 13 of the foregoing chapter to the end of this, seems rapt up with the contemplation of a great person under strange and unusual afflictions, whose character, with all the heights of rhetoric which the genius of grief and prophecy together could raise him to, he here sets himself with full purpose to describe. In all which description there is no one passage which does not speak something extraordinary and supernatural of the person described, and withal represent the describer of it in the highest degree of ecstasy and rapture; so that nothing could transcend the height of the expression but the sublimity of its subject. For still it fastens upon him the marks and tokens of some-

thing more than a man, indeed more than a creature; ascribing actions to him which surmount any created power, and so visibly, upon all principles of reason, above the strength and reach of the strongest arm of flesh, that if the person here spoken of be but a man, I am sure it requires the wit of more than a man to make sense of the prophecy. Who that great person therefore was, here so magnificently set forth by the prophet, is the thing now to be inquired into. In which inquiry we shall find several opinions, and every one of them pretending to give the right interpretation of the place. I shall reduce them all to these two.

First, The opinion of the ancient.

Secondly, The opinion of some later interpreters.

First, as for the ancient interpreters, I may boldly and truly say, that it was the general sense of all the old Jewish rabbies, that the person intended in this prophecy was the Messias. Take the affirmation of Rabbi Alschech, in his comment upon this prophecy, *Rabbini nostri beatæ memoriæ uno ore statuunt juxta receptam traditionem hic de rege Messia sermonem esse.* And though their opinion of the temporal greatness of their Messias might (if any thing) tempt them to draw this prophecy another way, (since it declares the low, abject, and oppressed condition of the person here treated of,) yet, to shew that a suffering Messias was no such paradox in the divinity of the ancient Jewish rabbies, it was a constant received speech among them, that, dividing all the afflictions of the people of God into three parts, one third was to fall upon the Messias.

And as for the doctors and fathers of the Christian church, they do all, with one unanimous breath, de-

clare this to be a prophecy of the Messias, and this Messias to be Jesus Christ. And so full are they to this purpose, that Esaias, upon the account of this prophecy, is styled by some of them *evangelista*, and *Paulus propheticus*. Nor was ever the least intimation given of any other sense of it, till, a little before this last century, a new Christianity has endeavoured to get footing in the Christian world.

Second. The other opinion is of the later interpreters, amongst which I account the Jewish, that is, such as have wrote after a thousand years since Christ's time; whose opinion in this matter will be found to have this eminent property of falsity, that it is very various. For having departed from the old received interpretation, they are no ways agreed what they shall substitute in the room of it. Some will have the subject of this prophecy to have been the people of Israel. Some indefinitely any just or righteous person. Some affirm it to have been Josiah; and one among the rest will needs have the person here spoken of to have been the prophet Jeremy. The authors of each of which opinions give us such insipid stories upon this chapter, as are fitter to be ushered in with the grave and solemn preface of *once upon a time*, than to be accounted interpretations of the word of God.

He who contends for the prophet Jeremy is one Rabbi Saadias Haggaon, and he stands alone, not being countenanced by any of his Jewish brethren, till one in the Christian church thought fit to be his second, and out of his zeal, forsooth, to the Christian faith, to wrest one of the strongest arguments out of the hands of the Christian church, which it has fought with against Judaism ever since

it was a church. And thus much I shall with confidence (because with evidence) affirm, that if such prophecies may be proved to have had their first and literal completion in the person of any besides Jesus of Nazareth, all arguments proving them to belong to him at a second hand, and by accommodation, as the word is, are but vain and precarious to the Jews, who will, and indeed upon his hypothesis may reject them, as easily as we can allege them, and then convince him who can.

But how can this prophecy be made to agree to Jeremy? With what truth or propriety could he be said to have been *exalted and extolled, and to have been very high; to have been stricken for our transgressions; and to have had the iniquity of us all laid upon him?* How could it be said of him, *Who shall declare his generation?* and that he *should see his seed, and prolong his days?* and also that he *should divide the spoil with the mighty?* with the like expressions.

Why yes, says our expositor, *he was exalted, and very high*, because the Chaldeans had him in admiration, which is yet more than we read of, and thanks to a good invention for it: though it must be confessed, that upon his being drawn out of the dungeon he was something *higher and more exalted* than he was before. In the next place *he was stricken for transgression, and had our iniquities laid upon him*, because by the sin and injurious dealing of the Jews he was cruelly and unworthily used, as indeed all or most of the prophets were, both before and after him. And then for that saying, *Who shall declare his generation?* The meaning of that, we are told, is, who shall reckon his years; for

he shall live to be very aged: though yet we know no more of his age, but that he prophesied about forty years; whereas some others have prophesied much longer, and particularly Hosea, who prophesied about fourscore. As for the other expression of his *seeing his seed, and prolonging his days*, that we are taught must signify, that he should see many of his converts in Egypt, where he should live for a long time. Though yet we read not of any one of those converts, nor of any such prolonging his days there, but that it is a constant tradition of antiquity that he died an untimely disastrous death, being knocked on the head in Egypt by his wicked countrymen with a fuller's club. And in the last place, for *his dividing the spoil with the mighty;* that, we are informed, was fulfilled in this, that Nebuzaradan, captain of the Chaldean host, as we find it in Jeremy xl. 5, gave him a reward and some victuals, (that is to say, a small supply or *modicum* of meat and money for his present support,) and so sent him away. A worthy glorious dividing of the spoil indeed, and much after the same rate that the poor may be said to divide the spoil, when they take their shares of what is given them at rich men's doors.

So then we have here an interpretation, but as for the sense of it, that, for ought I see, must shift for itself. But whether thus to drag and hale words both from sense and context, and then to squeeze whatsoever meaning we please out of them, be not (as I may speak with some change of the prophet's phrase) to *draw* lies with *cords* of blasphemy, and *nonsense* as it were with a *cart rope*, let any sober and impartial hearer or reader be judge. For whatsoever titles the itch of novelty and Socinianism has

thought fit to dignify such immortal, incomparable, incomprehensible interpreters with, yet if these interpretations ought to take place, the said prophecies (which all before[a] Grotius and the aforesaid rabbi Saadias unanimously fixed, in the first sense of them, upon the sole person of the Messiah) might have been actually fulfilled, and consequently the veracity of God in the said prophecies strictly accounted for, though Jesus of Nazareth had never been born. Which being so, would any one have thought, that the author of the book *de Veritate Religionis Christianæ, et de Satisfactione Christi*, could be also the author of such interpretations as these? No age certainly ever produced a mightier man in all sorts of learning than Grotius, nor more

[a] Having had the opportunity and happiness of a frequent converse with Dr. Pocock, (the late Hebrew and Arabick professor to the University of Oxon, and the greatest master certainly of the eastern languages, and learning, which this or any other age or nation has bred,) I asked him (more than once, as I had occasion) what he thought of Grotius's exposition of Isaiah liii. and his application of that prophecy, in the first sense and design of it to the person of the prophet Jeremy? To which, smiling and shaking his head, he answered, Why, what else can be thought or said of it, but that in this the opiniator overruled the annotator, and the man had a mind to indulge his fancy? This account gave that great man of it, though he was as great in modesty as he was in learning, (greater than which none could be,) and withal had a particular respect for Grotius, as having been personally acquainted with him. But the truth is, the matter lay deeper than so; for there was a certain party of men whom Grotius had unhappily engaged himself with, who were extremely disgusted at the book *de Satisfactione Christi*, written by him against Socinus, and therefore he was to pacify (or rather satisfy) these men, by turning his pen another way in his Annotations, which also was the true reason that he never answered Crellius; a shrewd argument, no doubt, to such as shall well consider these matters, that those in the Low Countries, who at that time went by the name of Remonstrants and Arminians, were indeed a great deal more.

happily furnished with all sorts of arms, both offensive and defensive, for the vindication of the Christian faith, had he not in his annotations too frequently turned the edge of them the wrong way.

Well therefore, taking it for manifest, and that upon all the grounds of rational and unforced interpretation, that the person here spoken of was the Messias, and that this Messias could be no other than Jesus of Nazareth, the great mediator of the second covenant, *very God, and very man*, in whom every tittle of this prophecy is most exactly verified, and to whom it does most peculiarly and incommunicably agree; we shall proceed now to take an account of the several parts of the text, in which we have these three things considerable.

First, The suffering itself; *he was stricken.*

Secondly, The nature of the suffering, which was penal, and expiatory; *he was stricken for transgression:* and,

Thirdly, The ground and cause of this suffering, which was God's propriety in, and relation to, the persons for whom Christ was stricken, implied in this word, *my people: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.*

Of each of which in their order: and,

First, For the suffering itself: *he was stricken.* The very word imports violence and invasion from without. It was not a suffering upon the stock of the mere internal weaknesses of nature, which carries the seeds and causes of its dissolution in its own bowels, and so by degrees withers and decays, and at length dies, like a lamp that for want of oil can burn no longer; but like a torch in its full flame beat and ruffled, and at length blown out by the breath

of a north wind: so was Christ dealt with in the very prime and vigour of his years, being by main force torn and stricken out of the world. Blows did the work of time, and stripes and spears were instead of age to put a period to his afflicted life. Now the greatness of this suffering will be made out to us upon these three accounts.

First, Upon the account of the latitude and extent of it.

Secondly, Of the intenseness and sharpness of it: and,

Thirdly, Of the person inflicting it.

First, As for the latitude or extent of it. The blow reached every part of his humanity, carrying the grief all over, till, by an universal diffusion of itself, it entered, according to the Psalmist's expression, *like water into his bowels, or like oil into his bones.* It spread itself into every part of his body, as if it had been another soul. Nothing was free from suffering that could suffer. Suffering seemed to be his portion, his inheritance, nay, his very property. Even the religion that he came to propagate and establish was a suffering religion, and by the severest method of establishment, he gave the first and the greatest instance of it in himself. He who would recount every part of Christ that suffered, must read a lecture of anatomy. *From the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, there was nothing* but the traces of pain and suffering: *they made long furrows upon his back,* says the Psalmist; they did, as it were, tear and plough up his innocent body. In his person we might have seen grief in its height and supremacy; grief triumphant, crowned, and arrayed in purple; grief reigning, and doing the ut-

most that it was able. It is a subject too well known, and too frequently discoursed of, to make descriptions of the thorns, the spears, and the nails, that acted their several parts in this tragedy, and that so, that the very narrative of our Saviour's passion cannot but beget another in every pious hearer of it. But when we have said the utmost of his bodily sufferings, we still know that nature has provided a support able to make and stand up against all these: for the strength and firmness of a resolved mind will bear a man above his infirmity, as the breath bears up the body from sinking: but when the supporter itself fails, when the *primum vivens* and the *ultimum moriens* has had a mortal blow, and the iron enters into the very soul, then baffled nature must surrender, and quit the combat, unless seconded and held up by something greater and mightier than itself. And this was our Saviour's condition. There was a sword which reached his very spirit, and pierced his soul, till it bled through his body; for they were the struggles and agonies of the inward man, the labours and strivings of his restless thoughts, which cast his body into that prodigious sweat. For though it was the flesh that sweated, it was the spirit that took the pains. It was that which was then treading the winepress of God's wrath alone, till it made him red in his apparel, and dyed all his garments with blood. What thought can reach, or tongue express, what our Saviour then felt within his own breast! The image of all the sins of the world, for which he was to suffer, then appeared clear and lively, and express to his mind. All the vile and horrid circumstances of them stood, as it were, particularly ranged be-

fore his eyes in all their dismal colours. He saw how much the honour of the great God was abused by them, and how many millions of poor souls they must inevitably have cast under the pressures of a wrath infinite and intolerable, should he not have turned the blow upon himself. The horror of which then filled and amazed his vast apprehensive soul, and those apprehensions could not but affect his tender heart, then brimful of the highest zeal for God's glory, and the most relenting compassion for the souls of men, till it fermented and boiled over with transport and agony, and even forced its way through all his body in those strange ebullitions of blood, not to be paralleled by the sufferings of any person recorded in any history whatsoever. It was this which drew those doleful words from him, *My soul is exceeding sorrowful*, &c. Περίλυπός ἐστιν ἡ ψυχή μου. It was surrounded, and, as it were, besieged with an army of sorrows. And believe it, his soul was too big and of too strong a make to bend under an ordinary sorrow. It was not any of those little things which make us put the finger in the eye, as loss of estate, friends, preferment, interest, and the like, things too mean to raise a tumult in the breast of a resolved stoick, and much less in his, who both placed and preached happiness, not only in the want, but in the very defiance of them.

And now after this his agony in the garden, I need not much insist upon the wounds given his reputation by the sword of a blaspheming tongue, the sharpest of all others, and which, like a poisoned dagger, hurting both with edge and venom too, at the same time both makes a wound and prevents its cure. Even a guilty person feels the sting of a ma-

licious report; and if so, much more must one who is innocent, and yet infinitely more must he, who was not only innocent, but innocence itself. Reputation is tender, and for it to be blown upon is to be tainted; like a glass, the clearer and finer it is, the more it suffers by the least breath. And therefore for him, who came to destroy the kingdom of Satan, to be traduced as a partner with, and an agent for Beelzebub; for him, whose greatest repasts were prayer and abstinence, and the most rigid severities upon himself, to be taxed as a wine-bibber, and a good fellow; for him, who came into the world both in life and death to bear witness to the truth, to suffer as an impostor and a deceiver; what could be more grievous and afflicting to a great innocence, joined with as great an apprehension!

However, his church gains this great advantage of comfort by it, that the worst of sufferings comes sanctified to our hands by the person of our grand example, who was reviled and slandered, and tossed upon the tongues of men before us. A greater martyrdom questionless than to be cast, as the primitive Christians were, to the mouths of lions, which are tender and merciful compared to the mouths of men; whether we look upon that bitter spirit which acted in those Jews, or in some Christians nowadays worse than Jews; men, who seem to have outdone all before them in the arts of a more refined malice and improved calumny. Qualities lately sprung up out of the stock of a spreading atheism, and a domineering, reigning sensuality; sins now made national and authentic, and so much both judgment and mercy-proof, that it is well if we can be cured without being cut off. But to return to

the business before us. We have now seen the first thing setting forth the greatness of this suffering; to wit, the latitude and extent of it; as that it seized both body and soul, and every part and faculty of both.

Secondly. The next thing declaring its greatness was the intenseness and sharpness of it. We have seen already how far it went; we are now to consider how deep. It fell not on him like a dew or mist, which only wets the surface of the ground, but like a pouring soaking rain, which descends into the very bowels of it. There was pain enough in every single part to have been spread in lesser proportions over the whole man. Christ suffered only the exquisiteness and heights of pain, without any of those mitigations which God is pleased to temper and allay it with as it befalls other men; like a man who drinks only the spirits of a liquor separated and extracted from the dull, unactive body of the liquor itself. All the force and activity, the stings and fierceness of that troublesome thing were, as it were, drained and distilled, and abridged into that cup which Christ drank of. There was something sharper than vinegar, and bitterer than gall, which that draught was prepared and made up with. We cannot indeed say, that the sufferings of Christ were long in duration; for to be violent and lasting too is above the methods or measures of nature. But he who lived at that rate, that he might be said to live an age every hour, was able to suffer so too; and to comprise the greatest torments in the shortest space; which yet by their shortness lost nothing of their force and keenness; as a penknife is as sharp as a spear, though not so long. That which promotes

and adds to the impressions of pain, is the delicate and exact crasis and constitution of the part or faculty aggrieved. And there is no doubt but the very fabric and complexion of our Saviour's body was a masterpiece of nature, a thing absolutely and exactly framed, and of that fineness as to have the quickest and most sensible touches of every object; and withal to have these advanced by the communion of his admirably made body, with his high and vigorous intellectuals. All which made him drink in pain more deeply, feel every lash, every wound with so much a closer and a more affecting sense. For it is not to be doubted but a dull fellow can endure the paroxysms of a fever, or the torments of the gout or stone, much better than a man of a quick mind and an exalted fancy; because in one pain beats upon a rock or an anvil, in the other it prints itself upon wax. One is even born with a kind of lethargy and stupefaction into the world, armed with an iron body and a leaden soul against all the apprehensions of ordinary sorrow; so that there is need of some pain to awaken such an one, and to convince him that he is alive: but our Saviour, who had an understanding too quick to let any thing that was intelligible escape it, took in the dolorous afflicting object in its full dimensions. He saw the utmost evil of every one of those strokes, which the guilt of our sins inflicted on him; and what his eye saw, his heart proportionably felt: for surely they must needs have been inconceivably afflicting, in the actual endurance, which were so dreadful in their very approach, that the horror of them put the man of God's right hand, the man made strong for that very purpose, to start back,

and decline the blow, could the avoidance of it have stood with the decrees of Heaven. *Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me:* which yet was not the voice of cowardice, but of human nature; nature, which by its first and most essential principle would have saved itself, might it have consisted with the saving of the world.

Thirdly. The third thing setting forth the greatness of this suffering, is the cause and author of it, which was God himself. The measure of every passion is the operation of the agent. And then we know what omnipotence can do; omnipotence employed, or rather inflamed by justice, in whose quarrel it was then engaged. We must not measure the divine strokes by the proportion of those blows which are inflicted by the greatest and most exasperated mortal; the condition of whose nature sets bounds to his power, when it cannot to his rage: so that, in the utmost executions of it, he acts but like a wasp; very angrily indeed, but very weakly. Every blow inflicted by the fiercest tyrant can reach no further than the body; and the body is but the dwellingplace, not any part of the soul; and consequently can no more communicate its ruins to that, than a man can be said to be wounded in his person because a wall of his house was broken down. Upon which account there have been some, whose souls have been so fortified with philosophy and great principles, as to enable them to laugh in Phalaris's bull, to sing upon the rack, and to despise the flames. For still, when God torments us by the instrumental mediation of the creature, his anger can fall upon us in no greater proportions than what can pass through the narrow capacities of a created being. For be

the fountain never so full, yet if it communicates itself by a little pipe, the stream can be but small and inconsiderable, and equal to the measures of the conveyance. God can no more give his *power* than his *glory to another;* there is no mortal arm can draw his bow: God cannot thunder or lighten by proxy. He alone is the *Father of spirits;* and none can reach the conscience but he who made it: and therefore, being to discharge the utmost of his vindictive justice upon the sins of mankind, then charged upon our Saviour, he took the sword into his own hand, entered the lists, and dealt with him immediately by himself. And then we find the difference of our Saviour's suffering by the difference of his behaviour. While he was buffeted, scourged, and nailed to the cross, we hear nothing from him; but, *like a lamb before the shearers, he was dumb:* not because he could not, but because he scorned to roar under the impressions of a finite anger. But when God reached forth his hand, and darted his immediate rebukes into his very soul and spirit, (as he did while he was hanging upon the cross,) then he cries out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Silence upon such a loss would have been but stupidity, and patience an absurdity; for when God withdrew his presence from him, that darkness which then covered the face of the whole earth was but a faint emblem of that blacker cloud of despair which had overcast his soul. It is not possible for us to conceive the utmost weight of those heavy strokes inflicted by the Almighty himself upon our Saviour. All the representations and little draughts of them made by words and fancy, are vastly short of the keen impressions of sense. But yet that which gives us the nearest resemblance

of them, surely, is the torment of a guilty mind under a state of desertion; when God shall turn the worm of conscience into a scorpion, and smite it with the secret invisible stings of his wrath, such as shall fester and rage inwardly, gnaw and rake the very entrails of the soul. The burden and anguish of this has been sometimes so insupportable, that some have professed themselves to envy the condition of Judas and the damned spirits, as thinking the endurance of those flames more tolerable than the expectation, and accordingly have done violence to their own lives, and so fled to hell as to a sanctuary, and chose damnation as a release. Far were such persons, God knows, from bettering their condition by completing that which they could not bear in the very beginnings and foretastes of it; yet, however, it demonstrates to us the unspeakable wretchedness of a guilty soul labouring under the hand of God. And by the way, let the boldest, the hardiest, and the securest sinner know, that God is able, without ever touching him either in his estate, his health, his reputation, or any other outward enjoyment dear to him, but merely by letting a few drops of his wrath fall upon his guilty conscience, so to scald and gall him with the lively sense of sin, that he shall live a continual terror to himself, carry about him an hell in his own breast, which shall echo to him such peals of vengeance every hour, that all the wine and music, all the honours and greatness of the world shall not be able to minister the least ease to his heartsick and desponding soul. Now in these torments of a guilty conscience we have some little image of the pains then suffered by our Saviour, the greatness of both being founded upon the same rea-

son, namely, that God is the sole and immediate inflicter of such strokes: and then surely the suffering must needs be grievous, when infinite justice passes sentence, and infinite power does execution.

And thus I have finished the first general thing proposed from the text, which was the suffering itself, expressed in these words, *he was stricken*, and that by considering the latitude, the intenseness, and also the cause of it: all of them so many arguments to demonstrate to us its unparalleled greatness.

2. The second general thing proposed was the nature and quality of this suffering; namely, that it was penal and expiatory; *he was stricken for transgression*. And to prove that it was penal, there needs no other argument to any clear, unbiassed understanding, than the natural, genuine, and unconstrained use of the word: for what other sense can there be of a man's being stricken or suffering for sin, but his being punished for sin? And that I am sure is spoke so plain and loud by the universal voice of the whole book of God, that scripture must be crucified, as well as Christ, to give any other tolerable sense of it. But since heresy has made such bold invasions upon those sacred writings, we will consider both those senses which these words are asserted to be capable of.

1. First of all then, some assert, that to be *stricken for transgression* imports not here a punishment for sins past, but a prevention or taking away of sin for the future. So that Christ is said to be stricken, to suffer, and to die for sin, because by all this he confirmed to us an excellent and holy doctrine, the belief of which has in it a natural aptness to draw men off from their sins. In a word, because Christianity

tends to make men holy, and cease from sin, and because Christ by his blood sealed the truth of Christianity, therefore is he said to die for sin; a strange and remote deduction, and such an one as the common rules and use of speaking would never have suggested. But then besides, because it is easy to come upon the authors of this perverse interpretation, by demanding of them, what fitness there could be in Christ's death to confirm his doctrine? And what reason the world could have to believe Christianity true, because the author of it, a pious, innocent, excellent person, was basely and cruelly put to death? Therefore they further say, that this effect of its confirmation is really and indeed to be ascribed to his subsequent resurrection, though only his death be still mentioned; that being the most difficult and heroic passage of all, that he either did or suffered for our sakes, and consequently the greatest instance of his patience, and persuasion of the truth of that doctrine for which he suffered. But by their favour, if Christ is said no otherwise to die for sin, than because he delivered a doctrine, the design of which was to draw men off from sin, and which was confirmed to be true only by his resurrection; how comes it to pass that this effect is still joined with his death, but never with his resurrection? It being said over and over, that he died for sin, suffered and bled for sin, but never that he rose again for sin. It is indeed said once, that *he rose again for our justification;* but in the very foregoing words it is said, that *he was delivered to death for our offences:* which shews that those words, *for our offences*, and *for our justification*, have there a very different sense, and bear a different relation to the words

with which they are joined, in that as well as in the other scriptures. But this whole invention is so forced and far-fetched, and so much out of the road of common reason, that it is impossible it should gain but by the strengths and prepossessions of prejudice; and where prejudice stands for judgment, for ought I see, it is as vain to urge arguments as to quote scriptures.

2. The other sense of these words, and which alone the catholic church receives for true, is, that Christ's being *stricken for sin*, signifies his being punished for sin; the word *for* in this case denoting the antecedent meritorious cause of his suffering, and not the final, as the school of Socinus does assert; and consequently must directly relate to the removal of the guilt of sin, and not the power, as is also affirmed by the same persons. Now that Christ's suffering and being *stricken for transgression*, imports that suffering to have been penal and expiatory, as it might with the highest evidence be demonstrated from several scriptures; so at this time I shall confine myself within the limits of the chapter from whence I took my text: and here I shall found the proof of it upon these two expressions.

First, That Christ is said to have *borne our sins*, in the 12th verse. Now, *to bear sin* is an Hebrew phrase for that which in Latin is *luere peccatum*, and in English *to be punished for sin*. And if to bear another man's sin or iniquity by suffering, does not imply the undergoing of the punishment due to that man's sin; we must invent a new way of expounding profane writers as well as sacred, and of interpreting the common speeches of men, as well as the word of God.

Secondly, The other argument shall be taken from that expression which declares Christ to have been made a sacrifice or an *offering for sin*, in the 10th verse, *When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin*. The proof of what I here affirm is grounded upon the use and design of a sacrifice, as it has been used by all nations in the world, which was to appease the Deity by paying down a life for sin; and that by the substitution of a sacrifice, whether of man or beast, to die and pay down his life instead of the sinner. For there was a tacit acknowledgment universally fixed in the hearts of all mankind, that *the wages of sin was death*, and that *without shedding of blood there could be no remission:* upon which was built the reason of all their sacrifices and victims. So surely, therefore, as Christ was a sacrifice, and as the design of a sacrifice is to pay down a life for sin, and as to pay down a life for sin is to be punished for sin; so sure it is that Christ's death and sufferings were penal. Now it being clear that the foundation of all punishment is compensation or exchange, that is to say, something paid down to divine justice for something done against it; and since all compensation implies a retribution equivalent to the injury done, therefore, that Christ might be qualified to be a sacrifice fit to undergo the full punishment due for the sins of mankind, two things were required.

1. An infinite dignity in his person; for since the evil and demerit of sin was infinite, and since Christ was so to suffer for it, as not to remain under those sufferings for an infinite duration, that infinity therefore was to be made up some other way; which could not be, but by the infinite worth and dignity of his

person, grasping in all the perfections and glories of the Deity, and by consequence deriving an infinite value to his sufferings.

2. The other qualification required was a perfect innocence in the person to suffer: for so much was specified by the paschal lamb, of which we still read in scripture, *that it was to be a lamb without blemish.* And there is no doubt but had Christ had any sin of his own to have satisfied for, he had been very unable to satisfy for other men's. He who is going to gaol for his own debts, is very unfit to be a security for another's.

But now this perfect innocence, which I affirm necessary to render Christ a fit and proper sacrifice, is urged by our adversaries to be the very reason why Christ's sufferings could not be penal, since punishment, in the very nature and essence of it, imports a relation to sin. To this I answer, that punishment does indeed import an essential relation to sin, but not of necessity to the sin of the person upon whom it is inflicted; as might be evinced by innumerable instances, as well as undeniable reasons.

If it be replied, that God has declared *that the soul that sins shall die;*

I answer, that this is only a positive law, according to which God declares he will proceed in the ordinary course of his providence; but it is not of natural and eternal obligation, so as universally to bind God in all cases; but that he may, when he pleases, deal otherwise with his creature. But this will receive further light from the discussion of the third and last general head, to which we now proceed. Namely,

3. The ground and cause of this suffering, which

was God's propriety in, and relation to the persons for whom Christ suffered, specified in these words, *my people: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.*

If it be here asked, upon what account the persons here spoken of were denominated and made God's people? I answer, that they were so by an eternal covenant and transaction between the Father and the Son; by which the Father, upon certain conditions to be performed by the Son, consigned over some persons to him to be *his people.* For our better understanding of which we are to observe, that the business of man's redemption proceeds upon a twofold covenant.

First, An eternal covenant made between the Father and the Son, by which the Father agreed to give both grace and glory to a certain number of sinners, upon condition that Christ would assume their nature, and pay down such a ransom to his justice, as should both satisfy for their sin, and withal merit such a measure of grace as should effectually work in them all things necessary to their salvation. And this covenant may be properly called a covenant of suretiship or redemption. Upon which alone, and not upon any covenant made between God and men in their own persons, is built the infallibility of the future believing, repenting, and finally persevering of such as Christ from all eternity undertook to make his people.

Secondly. The other is a covenant made in time, and actually entered into by God and men, by which God on his part promises to men eternal salvation, upon condition of faith and repentance on theirs. And this is called in scripture *the second covenant,*

or *the covenant of grace*, and stands opposed to that which is there called *the first covenant*, or *the covenant of works*.

Now, by that eternal compact or transaction between the Father and the Son, (of which alone we now speak,) was this donation of a certain determinate number of persons made to Christ to be his people, by virtue of which agreement or transaction he was, *in the fulness of time*, to suffer for them, and to accomplish the whole work of their redemption from first to last. For to affirm that Christ died only to verify a proposition, [that *whosoever believed should be saved*,] but in the mean time to leave the whole issue of things in reference to persons so loose and undetermined, that it was a question whether ever any one should actually believe, and very possible that none ever might, and consequently that after Christ had suffered, had been stricken, and died for transgression, yet, for any thing that he had done in all this, he might never have had a people; this certainly is a strange and new gospel, and such as the doctrine of our church seems utterly unacquainted with.

Having thus shewn the foundation upon which the persons here spoken of are called by the prophet God's people; namely, an eternal covenant, in which God the Father and the Son mutually agreed upon the terms of their redemption, we are now to observe, that the same thing that thus denominates and makes them God's people, makes them under the same relation to belong also to Christ, and that not only upon the account of his nature that he was God, but chiefly of his office, that he was their Mediator, which capacity made him equally concerned

in that eternal covenant, he accepting and agreeing to those terms that were proposed and offered him by the Father. By his acceptance of which, he became both a mystical head and a surety to those for whom he so undertook. And this relation of his to them was the cause why he both might be and actually was *stricken by God for their transgression*, without any violation of the divine justice, notwithstanding the perfect innocence of his person. For to render it just to inflict a punishment upon an innocent person instead of another, either of these two causes are sufficient.

First, An intimate conjunction between those persons; and that either natural, as between father and son, or political, as between king and people, and the like: or,

Secondly, The voluntary consent and will of an innocent person to undergo the punishment due to the nocent; as it is between a man and his surety.

Accordingly, from that covenant, by which the Father made over a certain number of persons to the Son to be his people, there arose this twofold relation of Christ to them.

1. Of a king to his people, or of a mystical head to his members, so that legally and politically they suffered as really in Christ, as the whole body suffers when the head is wounded or struck through with a dart.

2. The other relation is of a surety; so that the satisfaction paid down by Christ to God's justice for sin, is, in estimation of law, as really accounted to be paid down by the saints, as if they had paid it in their own persons.

And this is a further, and withal a full answer to

that objection formerly hinted from the innocence of Christ's person, as if it rendered him uncapable of punishment. For his own free, voluntary consent to be a surety for sinners, and responsible for all that divine justice could charge them with, transferred the guilt and obligation from their persons to his own.

In a word, the compact between Christ and his Father made him a king, a mystical head, and also a surety to some certain persons; and his being so, made them his people, and their being his people did, upon that account, make it both just and equitable for him to suffer, and to be *stricken for their transgression*, which is the result of the text, and the thing undertook by us to be proved.

I have now finished the several things proposed from the text; in which having set before you how much Christ has suffered, and all for our sakes, I hope it will kindle the workings of a pious ingenuity in every one of our breasts. For I am sure if Christ's suffering for us were the doctrine, gratitude should make our readiness to suffer for him the application. Christianity, I shew, was a suffering religion; and there are two sorts of suffering to which it will certainly expose every genuine professor of it.

1. The first is from himself.

2. The second from the world.

1. And first, it will engage him in a suffering from himself; even that grand suffering of self-denial and mortification, the sharpest and most indispensable of all others, in which every Christian is not only to be the sufferer, but himself also the executioner. *He who is Christ's*, says the apostle, *has crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.*

A severe discipline certainly, in which a man is to act his fiercest anger upon his dearest friends. For could nature ever yet suggest to any one the hatred of his own flesh, the crucifixion of his desires, and the stabbing of his most beloved affections? Nature indeed cannot, will not prompt it; but Christianity, which rises many strains above nature, both must and will. The best sacrifice to a crucified Saviour is a crucified lust, a bleeding heart, and a dying corruption. We cannot bring, nor indeed does Christ expect, a recompence for what he has suffered for us; yet that which he will accept, as if it were a recompence, is for us to deal cruelly with that body of sin which has caused the acting of all those cruelties upon him. Let the ambitious man lay his pride in the dust, the covetous man deposit his treasures in the banks of charity and liberality, and let the voluptuous epicure renounce his cups and his whores, and this will be a present to Heaven better than an whole hecatomb: nor could *the fruit of his body* fall so grateful a sacrifice upon God's altars as *the sin of his soul.* But it is like, the jolly world about us will but scoff at the paradox of such practices, and explode them as madness and melancholy: yet let those sons of pleasure know, that such as scorn to be thus melancholy in this world, will have but little cause to be merry in the next.

2. The other kind of suffering in which Christianity will engage a man, is from the world. Such is the genius and nature of the Christian religion, that it must unavoidably bring him, who owns it, in the power of it, under temporal troubles and afflictions. *In the world,* says Christ, *ye shall have tribulation.* And he spoke it not so much by a spirit

of prophecy as philosophy, and by an actual sight of it in its pregnant causes. For the contrariety of the principles and maxims of Christianity to those of the world, cannot but engage men in such practices as shall also thwart the customs and modes which govern the actions of the world. But where there is contrariety, there will be fighting; and where there is fighting, the weaker, I am sure, must suffer; and generally the Christian is so in all worldly encounters, whose chief defensatives lie not in that armour that is sword-proof or bullet-proof, and who wears no breastplate upon, but within his breast, that is, his innocence, his conscience, and his confidence in a reconciled God. Suffering is a thing which all men abhor, and that because they are ashamed of it; and their being so is grounded upon this opinion, that to suffer, in the very nature of it, seems to impeach the suffering person, either in the reputation of his power or of his innocence; that is, he suffers either because he is weak, and cannot hinder it, or because he is faulty, and so deserves it. But with every Christian, Christ is an abundant answer to both these objections. For when we see omnipotence hanging upon the cross, and God himself *scourged* and *spit upon;* and when we see him, who could have commanded fire from heaven, and legions of angels to his rescue, yet surrendering himself quietly to the will of his murderers, surely no mortal man, who is but dirt and worms-meat at the best, can pretend himself too great and too high to suffer. And again, when we behold virtue, innocence, and purity, more than angelical, crucified between thieves and malefactors, shall any man, whose birth and actions revile and speak him a sinner to his face, think himself too

good to come under the cross, and to take his share in the common lot of Christianity? It is not the suffering itself, but the cause of it, that is dishonourable. And even in the worst and most shameful of sufferings, though the hangman does the execution, yet it is the crime alone which does the disgrace.

Christ commands us nothing, but he enforces it with arguments from his person as well as from his word; and it is well if we can make a due use of them. For God knows how soon he may call us from our easy speculations and theories of suffering to the practical experience of it; how soon he may draw us forth for persecution and the fiery trial. Only this we may be sure of, that if these things be brought upon us for his honour, it will be for ours too to endure them. And be our distresses never so great, our calamities never so strange and unusual, yet we have both our Saviour's example to direct, and his promise to support us, who has left it upon record in his everlasting gospel, *that if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him.*

To whom, therefore, be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

A SERMON

UPON

THE RESURRECTION.

PREACHED

ON EASTER DAY, 1667.

Acts ii. 24.

Ὃν ὁ θεὸς ἀνέστησε, λύσας τὰς ὠδῖνας τοῦ θανάτου, καθότι οὐκ ἦν δυνατὸν κρατεῖσθαι αὐτὸν ὑπ' αὐτοῦ.

Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

IT is of infinite concern to mankind, both as to their welfare in this world and the next, to preserve in their minds a full belief of a future estate of happiness or misery, into which, according to the quality of their actions here, they must for ever be disposed of hereafter; the experience of all ages having found the insufficiency of bare human restraints to control the audacious sinfulness of some tempers and dispositions, without holding them under the awe of this persuasion. From which, though some by much and long sinning, and perverse ratiocinations caused thereby, have in a great measure disentangled their consciences, yet these are but few and inconsiderable, compared with the rest of the world, in whose minds education and better principles, grafted upon the very instincts of nature, have fixed this persuasion too deep to be ever totally rooted out. And it is from

the victorious influence of this, that the common peace of the world has been maintained against those bold invasions, which the corruption of man's nature would otherwise continually make upon it. But now, as highly necessary as it is for men to believe such a future estate, yet it must be acknowledged, that with the generality of the world this belief has stood hitherto upon very false, or at the best very weak foundations; and consequently, that it is of no small import to state and settle it upon better. For the doing of which, the most effectual ways, I conceive, may be these two:

1. By revelation.

2. By exemplification.

First. As to the first whereof, it must needs be, either by an immediate declaration of this great truth (not discoverable by reason) by a voice from heaven, or by God's inspiring some certain select persons with the knowledge of it, and afterwards enabling them to attest it to the world by miracles. And as this is undoubtedly sufficient in itself for such a purpose, so Providence has not been wanting, partly by revelation, and partly by tradition thereupon, to keep alive amongst men some persuasion at least of this important truth all along; as appears even from those fabulous accounts and stories which the heathen world still clothed, or rather corrupted it with. Nevertheless, such has been the prevalence of human corruption and infidelity, as in a great degree to frustrate all the impressions that bare revelation or tradition could make upon men's minds, while they chiefly governed their belief by the observation of their senses, which, from the daily occurring instances of mortality, shew them, *that as*

the tree fell, so it lay: and that nobody was ever seen by them to return from the mansions of the dead; but that, for any thing they could find to the contrary, all passed into dust and rottenness, and perpetual oblivion.

Secondly. The other way therefore of convincing the world of this momentous truth, (in comparison of which all science and philosophy are but trifles,) must be by exemplification; that is to say, by giving the world an instance or example of it in some person or persons, who having been confessedly dead, should revive, and return to life again. And this, one would think, should be as full and unexceptionable a proof that there may be a resurrection of men to a future estate as could be desired; nothing striking the mind of man so powerfully as instances and examples; which make a truth not only intelligible, but even palpable; sliding it into the understanding through the windows of sense, and by the most familiar as well as most unquestionable perceptions of the eye. And accordingly this course God thought fit to take in the resurrection of Christ, by which he condescended to give the world the greatest satisfaction, that infidelity itself could rationally insist upon: howbeit, notwithstanding so plain an address both to men's reason and sense too, neither has this course proved so successful for convincing of the world of a resurrection from the dead, and a future estate consequent thereupon, but that unbelief has been still putting in its objections against it. For it is not, I confess, the interest of such as live ill in this world to believe that there shall be another; or that they shall be sensible of any thing, after death has once done its work upon them: and therefore let truth

and scripture, and even sense itself, say what they will for a resurrection, men, for ought appears, will for ever square their belief to their desires, and their desires to their corruptions; so that, as we find it in St. Luke xvi. 31. *though they should even see one rise from the dead, they would hardly be persuaded of their own resurrection.* Such a sad and deplorable hardness of heart have men sinned themselves into, that nothing shall convince them but what first pleases them, be it never so much a delusion. Nevertheless the most wise and just God is not so to be mocked, who knows, that by raising Christ from the dead, he has done all that rationally can or ought to be done for the convincing of mankind that there shall be a resurrection, whether they will be convinced by it or no. But now, if after all it should be asked, How is Christ's resurrection a proof that the rest of mankind shall rise from the dead too? I answer, that, considered indeed as a bare instance or example, it proves no more, than that there may be such a thing, since the same infinite power which effected the one may as well effect the other; but then, if we consider it as an argument and a confirmation of that doctrine, (whereof the assertion of a general resurrection makes a principal part,) I affirm, that so taken it does not only prove that such a thing may be, but also that it actually shall be, and that as certainly as it is impossible for the divine power to set a seal to a lie, by ratifying an imposture with such a miracle. And thus as Christ's resurrection irrefragably proves the resurrection of the rest of mankind, so it no less proves Christ himself to have been the Messiah; for that, having all along affirmed himself to be so, he made good the

truth of what he had so affirmed by his miraculous rising again, and so gave as strong a proof of his messiahship, as infinite power, joined with equal veracity, could give. And upon this account we have his resurrection alleged by St. Peter for the same purpose, here in the text, which was part of his sermon to the Jews concerning Jesus Christ, whom he proves to be their true and long expected Messiah, against all the cavils of prejudice and unbelief, by this one invincible demonstration.

In the text then we have these three things considerable.

First, Christ's resurrection, and the cause of it, in these words, *whom God hath raised up.*

Secondly, The manner by which it was effected, which was, by *loosing the pains of death.* And,

Thirdly and lastly, The ground of it, which was its absolute necessity, expressed in these words, *it was not possible that he should be holden of it.* And,

1. For the first of these, the cause of the resurrection set forth in this expression, *whom God hath raised up.* It was such an action as proclaimed an omnipotent agent, and carried the hand of God writ upon it in broad characters, legible to the meanest reason. Death is a disease which art cannot cure; and the grave a prison which delivers back its captives upon no human summons. To restore life is only the prerogative of him who gives it. Some indeed have pretended by art and physical applications to recover the dead, but the success has sufficiently upbraided the attempt. Physic may repair and piece up nature, but not create it. Cordials, plasters, and fomentations cannot always stay a life when it is going, much less can they remand it when it is gone.

Neither is it in the power of a spirit or demon, good or bad, to inspire a new life: for it is a creation, and to create is the incommunicable prerogative of a power infinite and unlimited. Enter into a body they may, and so act and move it after the manner of a soul; but it is one thing to move, another to animate a carcass. You see the Devil could fetch up nothing of Samuel at the request of Saul, but a shadow and a resemblance, his countenance and his mantle, which yet was not enough to cover the cheat, or to palliate the illusion. But I suppose nobody will be very importunate for any further proof of this, that if Christ was raised, it must be by God who raised him. The angel might indeed roll away the stone from the sepulchre, but not turn it into a son of Abraham; and a less power than that which could do so, could not effect the resurrection.

2. I come now to the second thing, which is to shew the manner by which God wrought this resurrection, set forth in these words, *having loosed the pains of death.* An expression not altogether so clear, but that it may well require a further explication. For it may be inquired, with what propriety God could be said to loose the pains of death by Christ's resurrection, when those pains continued not till the resurrection, but determined and expired in the death of his body? Upon which ground it is, that some have affirmed, that Christ descended into the place of the damned; where during his body's abode in the grave, they say, that in his soul he really suffered the pains of hell; and this not unsuitably to some ancient copies, which read it not ὠδῖνας θανάτου, *the pains of death*, but ὠδῖνας ᾅδου, *the pains of hell;* and this also with much seeming con-

sonance to that article of the Creed in which Christ is said to have descended into hell. But to this I answer, that Christ suffered not any such pains in hell, as the forementioned opinion would pretend, which we may demonstrate from this, that if Christ suffered any of those pains during his abode in the grave, then it was either in his divine nature, or in his soul, or in his body: but the divine nature could not suffer, or be tormented, as being wholly impassible: nor yet could he suffer in his soul; forasmuch as in the very same day of his death, that passed into paradise, which surely is no place of pain: nor, lastly, in his body, for that being dead, and consequently for the time bereaved of all sense, could not be capable of any torment. And then, for answer to what was alleged from the ancient copies, it is to be observed, that the word ἅδου (which some render *hell*) indifferently signifies also *the grave*, and *a state of death*. And lastly, for that article of the Creed in which there is mention made of Christ's descent into hell, there are various expositions of it; but the most rational and agreeable is, that it means his abode in the grave, and under the state of death, three days and three nights, or rather three νυχθήμερα, *viz.* part of the first and third, (so called by a synecdoche of the part for the whole,) and the second entirely; whereby, as his burial signified his entrance into the grave, so his descending into hell signified his continuance there and subjection to that estate. And thus the three parts of his humiliation in the last and grand scene of it, do most appositely answer to the three parts of his exaltation. For first, his death answers to his rising again. Secondly, his burial answers to his ascending into heaven. And thirdly,

his descending into hell answers to his sitting at the right hand of God, in a state of never dying glory, honour, and immortality. But however, that his descending into hell mentioned in the Creed cannot signify his local descent into the place of the damned, the former argument disproving his suffering the pains of hell, will by an easy change of the terms sufficiently evince this also. For first, Christ could not descend according to his divine nature; since that which is infinite, and fills all places, could not acquire any new place. And as for his soul, that was in paradise, and his body was laid in the grave; and being so, what part of Christ could descend into hell, (the whole Christ being thus disposed of,) needs a more than ordinary apprehension to conceive.

We are therefore in the next place to see, how we can make out the reason of this expression upon some other or better ground. In order to which, it is very observable, that the same word which in the Greek text is rendered by ὠδῖνας, and in the English by *pains*, in the Hebrew signifies not only *pain*, but also a [b] *cord* or *band*, according to which it is very easy and proper to conceive, that the resurrection discharged Christ from the bands of death: besides that this rendition of the word seems also most naturally to agree with the genuine meaning of some other words in the same verse; as of λύσας, *having loosed*, which is properly applicable to *bands*, and not to *pains*; as also of κρατεῖσθαι, which signifies properly to be *bound* with some *cord* or *band:* so that undoubtedly this exposition would give the whole verse a much more natural and apposite construction, and withal remove the difficulty. But,

[b] See Dr. Hammond's Annot. on the place.

Secondly, Because the evangelist St. Luke follows the translation of the Septuagint, (who, little minding the Hebrew pointings, rendered the word חֶבְלֵי not by σχοινία, *cords* or *bands*, but ὠδῖνας *pains*,) we are therefore not to balk so great an authority, but to see how the scheme of the text may be made clear and agreeable even to this exposition.

To this therefore I answer,

First, That the words contain in them an Hebraism, *viz. the pains of death*, for *a painful death*; as it is said, Matth. xxiv. 15. *the abomination of desolation*, for *an abominable desolation*; and so the resurrection loosed Christ from a painful death, not indeed painful *in sensu composito*, as if it were so at the time of his release from it, but in a divided sense, (as the logicians speak,) it loosed him from a continuance under that death; which, relating to the time of his suffering it, was so painful.

2. But secondly, I answer further, that though the pains of death ceased long before the resurrection, so that this could not in strictness of sense be said to remove them; yet, taking in a metonymy of the cause for the effect, the *pains of death* might be properly said to have been *loosed* in the resurrection, because that estate of death into which Christ was brought by those foregoing pains was then conquered and completely triumphed over. Captivity under death and the grave was the effect and consequent of those pains; and therefore the same deliverance which discharged Christ from the one, might not improperly be said to loose him from the other. And thus Christ was no sooner bound, but within a little time he was loosed again. He was not so much buried, as for a while deposited in the grave for a small

inconsiderable space: so that even in this respect he may not inelegantly be said to have tasted of death; for a taste is transient, short, and quickly past. God rescued him from that estate, as a *prey from the mighty*, and a *captive from the strong:* and though he was in the very jaws of death, yet he was not devoured. Corruption, the common lot of mortality, seized not on him: worms and putrefaction durst not approach him: his body was sacred and inviolable; as sweet under ground as above it, and in death itself retaining one of the highest privileges of the living.

3. Come we now to the last and principal thing proposed; namely, the ground of Christ's resurrection, which was its absolute necessity, expressed in these words, *because it was not possible that he should be holden of it:* and that according to the strictest and most received sense of the word *possible.* For it was not only *par et æquum,* that Christ should not always be detained under death, because of his innocence, (as Grotius precariously, and to serve an hypothesis, would have the word δυνατὸν here signify,) but it was absolutely necessary that he should not, and impossible that he should continue under the bands of death, from the peculiar condition of his person, as well as upon several other accounts. And accordingly this impossibility was founded upon these five things:

1. The union of Christ's human nature to the divine.

2. God's immutability.

3. His justice.

4. The necessity of Christ's being believed in.

5. And lastly, the nature of his priesthood.

First of all then, the hypostatical union of Christ's

human nature to his divine, rendered a perpetual duration under death absolutely impossible. For how could that which was united to the great source and principle of life be finally prevailed over by death, and pass into an estate of perpetual darkness and oblivion? Even while Christ's body was divided from his soul, yet it ceased not to maintain an intimate, indissolvable relation to his divinity. It was assumed into the same person; for according to the Creed of Athanasius, *as the soul and body make one man; so the divine nature and the human make one Christ.* And if so, is it imaginable that the Son of God could have one of his natures rent wholly from his person? His divinity, as it were, buoyed up his sinking humanity, and preserved it from a total dissolution: for, as while the soul continues joined to the body, (still speaking *in sensu composito,*) death cannot pass upon it, forasmuch as that is the proper effect of their separation; so, while Christ's manhood was retained in a personal conjunction with his godhead, the bands of death were but feeble and insignificant, like the withes and cords upon Sampson, while he was inspired with the mighty presence and assistance of God's Spirit.

It was possible indeed that the divine nature might for a while suspend its supporting influence, and so deliver over the human nature to pain and death, but it was impossible for it to let go the relation it bore to it. A man may suffer his child to fall to the ground, and yet not wholly quit his hold of him, but still keep it in his power to recover and lift him up at his pleasure. Thus the divine nature of Christ did for a while hide itself from his humanity, but not desert it; put it into the chambers of death, but not lock the everlasting doors upon it.

The sun may be clouded, and yet not eclipsed, and eclipsed, but not stopped in his course, and much less forced out of his orb. It is a mystery to be admired, that any thing belonging to the person of Christ should suffer; but it is a paradox to be exploded, that it should perish. For surely that nature which, diffusing itself throughout the universe, communicates an enlivening influence to every part of it, and quickens the least spire of grass according to the measure of its nature, and the proportion of its capacity, would not wholly leave a nature, assumed into its bosom, and, what is more, into the very unity of the divine person, breathless and inanimate, and dismantled of its prime and noblest perfection. For life is so high a perfection of being, that in this respect the least fly or mite is a more noble being than a star. And God has expressly declared himself, *not the God of the dead, but of the living:* and this in respect of the very persons of men; but how much more with reference to what belongs to the person of his Son! For when natures come to unite so near, as mutually to interchange names and attributes, and to verify the appellation by which God is said to be man, and man to be God; surely man so privileged and advanced, cannot for ever lie under death, without an insufferable invasion upon the entireness of that glorious person, whose perfection is as inviolable as it is incomprehensible.

2. The second ground of the impossibility of Christ's continuance under death, was that great and glorious attribute of God, his immutability. Christ's resurrection was founded upon the same bottom with the consolation and salvation of be-

lievers, expressed in that full declaration made by God of himself, Malachi iii. 6. *I the Lord change not: therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.* Now the immutability of God, as it had an influence upon Christ's resurrection, was twofold.

First, In respect of his decree or purpose.

Secondly, In respect of his word or promise.

And first for his decree. God had from all eternity designed this, and sealed it by an irreversible purpose. For can we imagine that Christ's resurrection was not decreed as well as his death and sufferings? and these in the 23d verse of this chapter are expressly said to have been determined by God. It is a known rule in divinity, that whatsoever God does in time, that he purposed to do from eternity; for there can be no new purposes in God: since he who takes up a new purpose, does so because he sees some ground to induce him to such a purpose, which he did not see before; but this can have no place in an infinite knowledge, which by one comprehensive intuition sees all things as present, before ever they come to pass: so that there can be no new emergency that can alter the divine resolutions. And therefore it having been absolutely purposed to raise Christ from the dead, his resurrection was as fixed and necessary, as the purpose of God was irrevocable; a purpose which commenced from eternity, and was declared in the very beginnings of time; a purpose not to be changed nor so much as bent, and much less broke, by all the created powers in heaven and earth, and in hell besides. For though indeed death is a great conqueror, and his bands much too strong for nature and mortality; yet when overmatched by a decree,

this conqueror, as old as he has grown in conquest, must surrender back his spoils, unbind his captives, and, in a word, even death itself must receive its doom. From all which it is manifest, that where there is a divine decree, there is always an omnipotence to second it; and consequently, that by the concurrence of both, no less a power was employed to raise Christ out of the grave, than that which first raised the world itself out of nothing.

2. Let us consider God's immutability in respect of his word and promise; for these also were engaged in this affair. In what a clear prophecy was this foretold, and dictated by that Spirit, which could not lie. Psalm xvi. 10. *Thou shalt not suffer thy Holy One to see corruption.* And Christ also had frequently foretold the same of himself. Now when God says a thing, he gives his veracity in pawn to see it fully performed. *Heaven and earth may pass away sooner than one iota of a divine promise fall to the ground.* Few things are recorded of Christ, but the rear of the narrative is still brought up with this, that such a thing was done, *that it might be fulfilled what was spoken by such or such a prophet;* such a firm, unshaken, adamantine connection is there between a prophecy and its accomplishment. *All things that are written in the prophets concerning me,* says Christ, *must come to pass.* And surely then the most illustrious passage that concerned him could not remain under an uncertainty and contingency of event. So that, what is most emphatically said concerning the persevering obstinacy and infidelity of the Jews, John xii. 39, 40. *that they could not believe, because that Esaias had said, that God blinded their eyes, and har-*

dened their hearts, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, and so be converted, and he should heal them: the same, I affirm, may, with as great an emphasis, and a much greater clearness to our reason, be affirmed of Christ, that therefore death could not hold him, because the kingly prophet had long before sung the triumphs of his glorious resurrection in the forementioned prediction. In a word, whatsoever God purposes or promises, passes from contingent and merely possible into certain and necessary: and whatsoever is necessary, the contrary of it is so far impossible.

But when I say that the divine decree or promise imprints a necessity upon things, it may, to prevent misapprehension, be needful to explain what kind of necessity this is, that so the liberty of second causes be not thereby wholly cashiered and taken away. For this therefore we are to observe, that the schools distinguish of a twofold necessity, physical and logical, or causal and consequential; which terms are commonly thus explained, *viz.* that physical or causal necessity is when a thing by an efficient productive influence certainly and naturally causes such an effect: and in this sense neither the divine decree nor promise makes things necessary; for neither the decree nor promise, by itself, produces or effects the thing decreed or promised; nor exerts any active influence upon second causes, so as to impel them to do any thing; but in point of action are wholly ineffective. Secondly, logical or consequential necessity is, when a thing does not efficiently cause an event, but yet by certain infallible consequence does infer it. Thus the foreknowledge of any event, if it be true and certain, does certainly

and necessarily infer, that there must be such an event: forasmuch as the certainty of knowledge depends upon the certainty of the thing known. And in this sense it is, that God's decree and promise give a necessary existence to the thing decreed or promised, that is to say, they infer it by a necessary infallible consequence: so that it was as impossible for Christ not to rise from the dead, as it was for God absolutely to decree and promise a thing, and yet for that thing not to come to pass.

The third reason of the impossibility of Christ's detention under a state of death, was from the justice of God. God in the whole procedure of Christ's sufferings must be considered as a judge exacting, and Christ as a person paying down a recompence or satisfaction for sin. For though Christ was as pure and undefiled with the least spot of sin as purity and innocence itself; yet he was pleased to make himself the greatest sinner in the world by imputation, and rendering himself a surety responsible for our debts. For, as it is said, 2 Cor. v. 21. *he who knew no sin was made sin for us.* When the justice of God was lifting up the sword of vengeance over our heads, Christ snatched us away from the blow, and substituted his own body in our room, to receive the whole stroke of that dreadful retribution inflicted by the hand of an angry Omnipotence.

But now, as God was pleased so to comport with his justice, as not to put up the injury done it by sin without an equivalent compensation; so this being once paid down, that proceeding was to cease. The punishment due to sin was death, which being paid by Christ, divine justice could not any longer detain

him in his grave. For what had this been else, but to keep him in prison after the debt was paid? Satisfaction disarms justice, and payment cancels the bond. And that which Christ exhibited was *full measure, pressed down and running over*, even adequate to the nicest proportions, and the most exact demands of that severe and unrelenting attribute of God. So that his release proceeded not upon terms of courtesy, but of claim. The gates of death flew open before him out of duty; and even that justice which was infinite, was yet circumscribed within the inviolable limits of what was due. Otherwise guilt would even grow out of expiation, the reckoning be inflamed by being paid, and punishment itself not appease, but exasperate justice. Revenge indeed in the hands of a sinful mortal man is for the most part vast, unlimited, and unreasonable; but revenge in the hands of an infinite justice is not so infinite as to be also indefinite, but in all its actings proceeds by rule and determination, and cannot possibly surpass the bounds put to it by the merits of the cause and the measure of the offence. It is not the effect of mere choice and will, but springs out of the unalterable relation of equality between things and actions. In a word, the same justice of God which required him to deliver Christ to death, did afterwards as much engage him to deliver him from it.

4. The fourth ground of the impossibility of Christ's perpetual continuance under death was the necessity of his being believed in as a Saviour, and the impossibility of his being so without rising from the dead. As Christ by his death paid down a satisfaction for sin, so it was necessary that it should be declared to the world by such arguments as might

found a rational belief of it; so that men's unbelief should be rendered inexcusable. But how could the world believe that he fully had satisfied for sin, so long as they saw death, the known wages of sin, maintain its full force and power over him, holding him, like an obnoxious person, in durance and captivity? When a man is once imprisoned for debt, none can conclude the debt either paid by him or forgiven to him, but by the release of his person. Who could believe Christ to have been a God and a Saviour while he was hanging upon the tree? A dying, crucified God, a Saviour of the world who could not save himself, would have been exploded by the universal consent of reason as an horrible paradox and absurdity. Had not the resurrection followed the crucifixion, that scoff of the Jews had stood as an unanswerable argument against him, Mark xv. 31. *Himself he cannot save;* and in the 32d verse, *Let him come down from the cross, and we will believe in him.* Otherwise, surely, that which was the lowest instance of human weakness and mortality could be no competent demonstration of a Deity. To save is the effect of power, and of such a power as prevails to a complete victory and a triumph. But it is expressly affirmed, 2 Cor. xiii. 4. *that Christ was crucified through weakness.* Death was too hard for his humanity, and bore away the spoils of it for a time. So that, while Christ was in the grave, men might as well have expected that a person hung in chains should come down and head an army, as imagine that a dead body, continuing such, should be able to triumph over sin and death, which so potently triumphs over the living. The discourse of the two disciples going

to Emmaus, and expecting no such thing as a resurrection, was upon that supposition hugely rational and significant. Luke xxiv. 21. *We trusted*, said they, *that this had been he who should have redeemed Israel:* thereby clearly implying, that upon his death they had let that confidence fall to the ground together with him. For they could not imagine that a breathless carcass could chase away the Roman eagles, and so recover the kingdom and nation of the Jews from under their subjection; which was the redemption that even the disciples (till they were further enlightened) promised themselves from their Messiah. But the argument would equally, nay, more strongly hold against a spiritual redemption, supposing his continuance under a state of death, as being a thing in itself much more difficult. For how could such an one break the kingdom of darkness, and set his foot upon *principalities and powers, and spiritual wickednesses in high places*, who himself fell a sacrifice to the wickedness of mortal men, and remained a captive in the lower parts of the earth, reduced to a condition, not only below men's envy, but below their very feet?

5. The fifth and last ground of the impossibility of Christ's perpetual continuance under a state of death, was the nature of the priesthood which he had took upon him. The apostle, Heb. viii. 4, says, *that if he were upon earth, he should not be a priest.* Certainly then much less could he be so, should he continue under the earth. The two great works of his priesthood were, to offer sacrifice, and then to make intercession for sinners, correspondent to the two works of the Mosaical priesthood; in which

the priest first slew the lamb, and then with the blood of it entered into the holy of holies, there to appear before God in the behalf of the people. Christ therefore, after that he had offered himself upon the cross, was to enter into heaven, and there, presenting himself to the Father, to make that sacrifice effectual to all the intents and purposes of it. Upon which account the apostle, to express his fitness for the priesthood infinitely beyond any of the sons of Aaron, states it upon this, Heb. vii. 25, *that he lives for ever to make intercession for us, and* upon that very score also *is able to save to the uttermost.* But surely the dead could not intercede for the living, nor was the grave a *sanctum sanctorum.* Had not Christ risen again, his blood indeed might have cried for vengeance upon his murderers, but not for mercy upon believers. In short, it had spoke no better things than the blood of Abel, which called for nothing but a fearful judgment upon the head of him who shed it. Christ's death merited a redemption for the world, but Christ while dead could not shew forth the full effects of that redemption. He made the purchase at his death, but he could not take possession till he was returned to life. Ever since Christ ascended into heaven, he has been pursuing the great work begun by him upon the cross, and applying the virtue of his sacrifice to those for whom it was offered. It is affirmed by some, and that not without great probability of reason, that the souls of the saints who died before Christ's resurrection did not actually enter into a state of complete glory, till Christ, the great captain of their salvation, upon his ascension first entered into it himself, and then made way for others. So that, according to that divine

anthem of the church, *after that he had overcome the sharpness of death, then* at length, and not till then, *he opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.* And thus I have given five several reasons, why it was not possible that a state of death should finally prevail over Christ, which was the thing to be proved. And I have nothing further to recommend to your consideration, but only two things, which the very nature of the subject seems of itself to imprint upon all pious minds.

1. The first is a dehortation from sin, and that indeed the strongest that can be. For can we imagine, that the second Person in the glorious Trinity would concern himself to take upon him our flesh, and to suffer, and die, and at length rise again, only to render us the more secure and confident in our sins? Would he neither see nor endure any corruption in his dead body, that we should harbour all the filth and corruption imaginable in our immortal souls? Did he conquer and triumph over death, that we should be the slaves and captives of that which is worse than death? Christ has declared that he will dwell in those whom he assumes into the society of his mystical body: but can we think, that he who passed from a clean new sepulchre into an heavenly mansion, will descend from thence to take up his habitation in the rotten sepulchre of an heart possessed and polluted with the love of that which he infinitely hates? It will little avail us, that Christ rose from a temporal death, unless we also rise from a spiritual. For those who do not imitate as well as believe Christ's resurrection, must expect no benefit by it.

2. Christ's resurrection is an high and sovereign consolation against death. Death, we know, is the

grand enemy of mankind, the merciless tyrant over nature, and the king of terrors. But, blessed be God, Christ has given a mortal blow to his power, and broke his sceptre. And if we, by a thorough conquest of our sins, and rising from them, can be but able to say, *O sin, where is thy power?* we may very rationally and warrantably say thereupon, *O death, where is thy sting?* So that when we come to resign back these frail bodies, these vessels of mortality, to the dust, from whence they were taken, we may yet say of our souls as Christ did of the damsel whom he raised up, that she was not dead, but only slept; for, in like manner, we shall as certainly rise out of the grave, and triumph over the dishonours of its rottenness and putrefaction, as we rise in the morning out of our beds, with bodies refreshed, and advanced into higher and nobler perfections. For the head being once risen, we may be sure the members cannot stay long behind. And Christ is already risen and gone before, to prepare mansions for all those who belong to him under that high relation, *that where he is, they* (to their eternal comfort) *may be also*, rejoicing and singing *praises and hallelujahs to him who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.*

To whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, to eternal ages. Amen.

The Christian Pentecost: or the solemn effusion of the Holy Ghost; in the several miraculous gifts conferred by him upon the Apostles and first Christians;

SET FORTH IN

A SERMON

PREACHED AT WESTMINSTER ABBEY, 1692.

1 Cor. xii. 4.

Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

OUR blessed Saviour having newly changed his crown of thorns for a crown of glory, and ascending up on high took possession of his royal estate and sovereignty, according to the custom of princes, is here treating with this lower world (now at so great a distance from him) by his ambassador. And, for the greater splendour of the embassy, and authority of the message, by an ambassador no ways inferior to himself, even the Holy Ghost, the third Person in the blessed Trinity, *in glory equal, in majesty co-eternal;* and therefore most peculiarly fit, not only as a deputy, but as a kind of *alter idem* to supply his place and presence here upon earth: and indeed had he not been equal to him in the Godhead, he could no more have supplied his place than he could have filled it: which we know, in the accounts of the

world, are things extremely different; as by sad and scandalous experience is too often found.

Now the sum of this his glorious negotiation was to confirm and ratify Christ's doctrine, to seal the new charter of the world's blessedness given by Christ himself, and drawn up by his apostles: and certainly, it was not a greater work first to publish, than it was afterwards to confirm it. For Christianity being a religion made up of truth and miracle, could not receive its growth from any power less than that which first gave it its birth. And being withal a doctrine contrary to corrupt nature, and to those things which men most eagerly loved, to wit, their worldly interests and their carnal lusts, it must needs have quickly decayed, and withered, and died away, if not watered by the same hand of Omnipotence by which it was first planted.

Nothing could keep it up, but such a standing, mighty power, as should be able upon all occasions to countermand and control nature; such an one as should, at the same time, both instruct and astonish; and baffle the disputes of reason by the obvious overpowering convictions of sense.

And this was the design of the Spirit's mission: that the same Holy Ghost, who had given Christ his conception, might now give Christianity its confirmation. And this he did by that wonderful and various effusion of his miraculous gifts upon the first messengers and propagators of this divine religion. For as our Saviour himself said, John iv. 48, *Unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe;* so that sight was to introduce belief: and accordingly, the first conquest and conviction was

made upon the eye, and from thence passed victorious to the heart.

This therefore was their rhetoric, this their method of persuasion. Their words were works: divinity and physic went together: they cured the body, and thereby convinced the soul: they conveyed and enforced all their exhortations, not by the arts of eloquence, but by the gift of tongues; these were the speakers, and miracle the interpreter.

Now in treating of these words, I shall consider these three things.

First, What those gifts were, which were conferred by the Spirit both upon the apostles and first professors of Christianity.

Secondly, What is imported and to be understood by their diversity. And,

Thirdly and lastly, What are the consequences of their emanation from one and the same Spirit.

First. And first, for the first of them. These gifts are called in the original χαρίσματα, that is to say, *acts of grace* or *favour;* and signify here certain qualities and perfections, which the Spirit of God freely bestowed upon men, for the better enabling them to preach the gospel, and to settle the Christian religion in the world: and accordingly we will consider them under that known dichotomy, or division, by which they stand divided into ordinary and extraordinary.

And first for the ordinary gifts of the Spirit, these he conveys to us by the mediation of our own endeavours. And as he, who both makes the watch, and winds up the wheels of it, may not improperly be said to be the author of its motion; so God, who

first created, and since sustains the powers and faculties of the soul, may justly be called the cause of all those perfections and improvements, which the said faculties shall attain unto by their respective operations. For that which gives the form, gives also the consequents of that form; and the principle, with all its appendant actions, is to be referred to the same donor.

But God forbid, that I should determine God's title to our actions barely in his giving us the power and faculty of acting. Durandus indeed, an eminent schoolman, held so, and so must Pelagius and his followers hold too, if they will be true to, and abide by their own principles.

But undoubtedly, God does not only give the power, but also vouchsafes an active influence and concurrence to the production of every particular action, so far as it has either a natural or a moral goodness in it.

And therefore, in all acquired gifts, or habits, such as are those of philosophy, oratory, or divinity, we are properly συνεργοὶ, *co-workers with God.* And God ordinarily gives them to none, but such as labour hard for them. They are so his gifts, that they are also our own acquisitions. His assistance and our own study are the joint and adequate cause of these perfections: and to imagine the contrary, is all one, as if a man should think to be a scholar, barely by his master's teaching, without his own learning. In all these cases, God is ready to do his part, but not to do both his own and ours too.

Secondly. The other sort of the Spirit's gifts are extraordinary. Which are so absolutely and entirely from God, that the soul, into which they are con-

veyed, contributes nothing to the obtaining of them but a bare reception: as when you pour some generous wine or liquor into a cask or vessel, that affords nothing to its own fulness, but a mere capacity; the rest it owes wholly to the liberal hand that infused it: and no doubt, from an allusion to this, such endowments are said to be by way of infusion from the Holy Ghost.

Of which kind were the gift of miracles, the gift of healing, the gift of prophecy and of speaking with tongues; which great things might indeed be the object of men's admiration, and sometimes also the motive of their envy, but never the effect or purchase of their own endeavours.

Now concerning these gifts we must observe also, that there was no small difference amongst them, as to the manner of their inexistence in the persons who had them.

For one of them, to wit, the gift of tongues, after its first infusion by the Spirit, might be in a man by habitual inherence, as a standing principle or power residing in the soul, and enabling it upon any occasion to express itself in several languages. There being no difference between the acquired and the supernatural knowledge of tongues, as to the nature and quality of the things themselves, but only in respect of their first obtainment, that one is by industrious acquisition, the other by divine infusion.

But then for the gifts of healing the sick, raising the dead, and the like; inasmuch as these were immediate emanations from, and peculiar effects of an infinite and divine power. Such a power could not be made habitually to inhere and reside in the apostles; nor indeed in any created being whatsoever.

But only by an exterior assistance, the power of God was ready at hand, upon special and emergent occasions, at their invocation, or word, (as God should think fit,) to produce such miraculous effects: for if this power of healing had been habitually lodged in the apostles, so that they might exert and make use of it when they pleased, it will be hard to give a satisfactory reason, why St. Paul should leave Trophimus at Miletum sick, as we find he did, 2 Tim. iv. 20.

And then, lastly, for the gift of prophecy, and foretelling future events; neither was this in the soul by constant inhesion and habitual abode; but (as we may not unfitly express it) only by sudden strictures, by transient immissions, and representations of the ideas of things future, to the imagination. In a word, it was in the mind, not as an inhabitant, but as a guest; that is, by intermittent returns and ecstasies, by occasional raptures and revelations; as is clear from what we read of the prophets in the Old Testament. And thus much I thought good to discourse of the nature of these gifts, and to shew what kind of things they were; how they qualified and affected the apostles and primitive Christians, in the exercise of them; that so we may not abuse our understandings by an empty notion of the word, without a clear and distinct apprehension of the thing.

And here, I doubt not, but some will be apt to inquire, how long these extraordinary and miraculous gifts continued in the church: for the resolution of which, the very nature of the thing itself will suggest thus much, that the conferring of these gifts being in order to the establishment of a church,

and the settling of a new religion in the world, their duration was to be proportioned to the need which that new religion had of such credentials and instruments of confirmation. For when Christianity first appeared in the world, it found it under the mighty prejudice and prepossession of two contrary religions, but both of them equally bent, and set against that, to wit, Gentilism and Judaism. Which prejudices nothing could conquer but the arm of Omnipotence itself, as it were, made bare before them, in such stupendous works, as could not but convince them to their face, that it was a religion which came from God. But when these prejudices were once removed, by the actual entertainment of and submission to the Christian faith, there could not be the same use or need of miracles then, which there was before. For still we must remember, that the state of a church in its infancy and first beginnings, and in its maturity and continuance, is very different, and consequently that the exigencies of it under each condition must equally differ too. It is a much harder work first to advance and put a thing into motion, than to continue and keep up that motion being once begun. For though indeed, as we observed before, there is an omnipotence required to maintain, as well as first to set up the Christian church; yet it does not therefore follow that this omnipotence must still exert itself to the same degree, and after the same way, in one case, that it does in the other.

Wherefore the use and purpose of miracles being extraordinary, and to serve only for a time, they were not by their continuance to thwart their design, nor to be made common by their being perpe-

tual. The exact period of their duration can hardly be assigned; but manifest it is from all history, that they, or at least some of them, continued long after the apostles' time; as we may gather from the several ages of those eminent fathers and Christian writers, who have so freely given in their testimony concerning the ejecting of evil spirits from persons possessed, as very common in their time in the Christian church; a power no doubt supernatural, and therefore miraculous: such as were Justin Martyr, who lived something before the middle of the second century, and Irenæus, who lived about thirty years after, and Tertullian, who lived in the latter end of the second and the beginning of the third, and Minutius Felix thereabouts, and St. Cyprian about the middle of the third, and Lactantius about the beginning of the fourth. All these, I say, according to the times they lived in, speak of this power of casting out devils (but more especially Tertullian in the twenty-third chapter of his Apologetic) with so much assurance, that it must needs prove it to have been very frequent amongst the Christians in those days; as several passages in those forementioned writers particularly declare: which might easily be produced and rehearsed by us, could we spare room enough for them in so short a discourse.

But however, certain it is, that now these extraordinary and miraculous powers are ceased, and that upon as good reason as at first they began. For when the spiritual building is consummate, and not only the corner stone laid, but the superstructure also finished, to what purpose should the scaffolds any longer stand? which when they leave off to

contribute to the building, can serve for little else but to upbraid the folly of the builder. Besides, that by so long a continuance miracle would almost turn into nature, or at least look very like it; the rarities of heaven would grow cheap and common, and, (which is very preposterous to conceive,) they would be miracles without a wonder.

The Papists indeed, who, having swallowed and digested the belief of so many monstrous contradictions, would do but very unwisely, and disagreeably to themselves, if, for ever after, they should stick at any advantageous absurdity; these, I say, hold, that the gift of miracles still continues ordinary in their church; and that the Christian religion has still the same need of such miraculous confirmations as it had at first.

Where, if by the Christian they mean their own popish religion, I am so fully of their mind, that I think there is need, not only of daily, but even of hourly, or rather continual miracles, to confirm it; if it were but in that one single article of transubstantiation. But then, we know whose badge and character the scripture makes it, to come in lying wonders; and we know also, that lying wonders are true impostures: and theirs are of that nature, that the fallacy is so gross, and the cheat so transparent in them, that, as it hardens the Jews and Mahumetans with a desperate, invincible prejudice against Christianity, as a thing as false as those miracles which they see it recommended by; so, I am confident, that it causes many Christians also to nauseate their own religion, and to fall into secret atheism; being apt to think (as even these impostors also pretend) that the very miracles of the apostles

might be of the same nature with those which they see daily acted by these spiritual jugglers: so that hereby the grand proof of Christianity falls to the ground, and has no force or hold upon men's minds at all. Whereas our Saviour himself laid the main stress and credit of his gospel, and of his mission from God, upon his miracles. *The works that I do*, says he, *bear witness of me*, John x. 25. And, *Believe me for my very works' sake*, John xiv. 11. And, *Had I not done amongst them the works which no other man did, they had not had sin*, John xv. 24. So that we see here, that the credit of all turned upon his miracles, his mighty and supernatural works.

But as, we know, it often falls out, that when a man has once got the character of a liar, even truth itself is suspected, if not absolutely disbelieved, when it comes from the mouth of such an one; so these miracle-mongers having alarmed the world round about them to a discernment of their tricks, when they came afterwards to preach Christianity, especially to infidels, and to press it upon men's belief in the strength of those miraculous works which were truly and really done by Christ; yet, since they pretend the same of their own works too, (which all people see through, and know to be lies and impostures,) all that they preach of Christ is presently looked upon as false and fictitious, and leaves the minds of men locked up under a fixed, obstinate, and impregnable infidelity. Such a fatal blow has the legerdemain of those wretches given to the Christian religion, and such jealousies have they raised in some men's thoughts against it, by their false miracles and fabulous stories of the romantic

feats of their pretended saints. In all which there is nothing indeed strange or miraculous, but the impudence and impiety of such as report and make them, and the folly of such as can believe them.

2. Pass we now to the second thing proposed, which is to shew what is meant by this diversity of gifts mentioned in the text. It imports, I conceive, these two things:

1. Something by way of affirmation, which is variety.

2. Something by way of negation, which is contrariety.

1. And first, for the first of them. It imports variety; of which excellent qualification, it is hard to say, whether it makes more for use or ornament. It is the very beauty of providence, and the delight of the world. It is that which keeps alive desire, which would otherwise flag and tire, and be quickly weary of any one single object. It both supplies our affections and entertains our admiration; equally serving the innocent pleasures and the important occasions of life. And now all these advantages God would have this desirable quality derive even upon his church too. In which great body there are and must be several members having their several uses, offices, and stations: as in the 28th verse of this chapter (where my text is) the apostle tells us, that *God has placed in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly preachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues:* the particular function and employment of so many parts subserving the joint interest and design of the whole. As the motion of a clock is a complicated motion of

so many wheels fitly put together; and life itself but the result of so many several operations, all issuing from and contributing to the support of the same body. The great help and furtherance of action, is order; and the parent of order is distinction. No sense, faculty, or member must encroach upon or interfere with the duty and office of another: for, as the same apostle discourses in the two next verses, *Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?* No; but as in the natural body the eye does not speak, nor the tongue see; so neither in the spiritual is every one who has the gift of prophecy endued also with the gift and spirit of government; every one, who may speak well, and pertinently enough upon a text, is not therefore presently fit to rule a diocese; nor is a nimble tongue always attended with a strong and a steady head. If all were preachers, who should govern? or rather indeed, who could be governed? If the body of the church were all ear, men would be only hearers of the word, and where would then be the doers? For such, I am sure, we are most to seek for in our days, in which, sad experience shews that hearing of sermons has, with most, swallowed up and devoured the practice of them, and manifestly serves instead of it; rendering many zealots amongst us as really guilty of the superstition of resting in the bare *opus operatum* of this duty, as the Papists are or can be charged to be in any of their religious performances whatsoever. The apostle justly reproaches such with *itching ears*, 2 Tim. iv. 3. and I cannot see, but that the itch in the ear is as bad a distemper

as in any other part of the body, and perhaps a worse.

But to proceed: God has use of all the several tempers and constitutions of men, to serve the occasions and exigences of his church by. Amongst which, some are of a sanguine, cheerful, and debonair disposition, having their imaginations, for the most part, filled and taken up with pleasing ideas and images of things; seldom or never troubling their thoughts, either by looking too deep into them, or dwelling too long upon them. And these are not properly framed to serve the church either in the knotty, dark, and less pleasing parts of religion, but are fitted rather for the airy, joyful offices of devotion; such as are praise and thanksgiving, jubilations and hallelujahs; which, though indeed not so difficult, are yet as pleasing a work to God as any other. For they are the noble employment of saints and angels; and a lively resemblance of the glorified and beatifick state; in which all that the blessed spirits do, is to rejoice in the God who made and saved them, to sing his praises, and to adore his perfections.

Again, there are others of a melancholy, reserved, and severe temper, who think much, and speak little; and these are the fittest to serve the church in the pensive, afflictive parts of religion, in the austerities of repentance and mortification, in a retirement from the world, and a settled composure of their thoughts to self-reflection and meditation. And such also are the ablest to deal with troubled and distressed consciences, to meet with their doubts, and to answer their objections, and to ransack every corner of their shifting and fallacious hearts, and, in a word, to lay

before them the true state of their souls, having so frequently descended into, and took a strict account of their own. And this is so great a work, that there are not many whose minds and tempers are capable of it, who yet may be serviceable enough to the church in other things. And it is the same thoughtful and reserved temper of spirit which must enable others to serve the church in the hard and controversial parts of religion: which sort of men, (though they should never rub men's itching ears from the pulpit,) the church can no more be without, than a garrison can be without soldiers, or a city without walls, or than a man can defend himself with his tongue, when his enemy comes against him with his sword. And therefore great pity it is, that such as God has eminently and peculiarly furnished, and, as it were, cut out for this service, should be cast upon and compelled to the popular, speaking, noisy part of divinity; it being all one, as if, when a town is besieged, the governor of it should call off a valiant and expert soldier from the walls, to sing him a song, or play him a lesson upon the violin at a banquet, and then turn him out of town, because he could not sing and play as well as he could fight. And yet, as ridiculous as this is, it is but too like the irrational and absurd humour of the present age, which thinks all sense and worth confined wholly to the pulpit. And many excellent persons, because they cannot make a noise with chapter and verse, and harangue it twice a day to factious tradesmen and ignorant old women, are esteemed of as nothing, and scarce thought worthy to eat the church's bread. But, for all these false notions and wrong measures of things and persons, so scandalously prevalent amongst

us, *wisdom*, as our Saviour tells us, *is and will be justified of her children.*

But then again, there are others besides these, who are of a warmer and more fervent spirit, having much of heat and fire in their constitution: and God may and does serve his church even by such kind of persons as these also, as being particularly fitted to preach the terrifying rigours and curses of the law to obstinate daring sinners; which is a work as absolutely necessary, and of as high a consequence to the good of souls, as it is that men should be driven, if they cannot be drawn off from their sins; that they should be cut and lanced, if they cannot otherwise be cured; and that the terrible trump of the last judgment should be always sounding in their ears, if nothing else can awaken them. But then, while such persons are thus busied in preaching of judgment, it is much to be wished that they would do it with judgment too; and not preach hell and damnation to sinners so, as if they were pleased with what they preached. No; let them rather take heed that they mistake not their own fierce temper for the mind of God; for some I have known to do so, and that at such a rate, that it was easy enough to distinguish the humour of the speaker from the nature of the thing he spoke. Let ministers threaten death and destruction even to the very worst of men in such a manner, that it may appear to all their sober hearers that they do not desire, but fear that these dreadful things should come to pass: let them declare God's wrath against the hardened and impenitent, as I have seen a judge condemn a malefactor, with tears in his eyes: for surely much more should a dispenser of the word, while he is pro-

nouncing the infinitely more killing sentence of the divine law, grieve with an inward, bleeding compassion for the misery of those forlorn wretches whom it is like to pass upon. But I never knew any of the Geneva or Scotch model (which sort of sanctified reprobationers we abound with) either use or like this way of preaching in my life; but generally whips and scorpions, wrath and vengeance, fire and brimstone, made both top and bottom, front and rear, first and last, of all their discourses.

But then, on the contrary, there are others again of a gentler, a softer, and more tender genius, and these are full as serviceable for the work of the ministry as the former sort could be, though not in the same way; as being much fitter to represent the meekness of Moses, than to preach his law; to bind up the broken-hearted, to speak comfort and refreshment to the weary, and to take off the burden from the heavy laden. Nature itself seems peculiarly to have fitted such for the dispensations of grace. And when they are once put into the ministry, they are, as it were, marked and singled out by Providence to do those benign offices to the souls of men, which persons of a rougher and more vehement disposition are by no means so fit or able to do. These are the men whom God pitches upon for the heralds of his mercy, with a peculiar emphasis and felicity of address, to proclaim and issue out the pardons of the gospel, to close up the wounds which the legal preacher had made, to bathe and supple them with the oil of gladness; and, in a word, to crown the sorrows of repentance with the joys of assurance. And thus we have seen how the gospel must have both its *Boanerges* and its *Barnabas, sons of thun-*

der, and *sons of consolation:* the first, as it were, to cleanse the air and purge the soul, before it can be fit for the refreshments of a sunshine, the beams of mercy, and the smiles of a Saviour.

David had shewn himself but a mean psalmist, had his skill reached no further than to one note: and therefore, Psalm ci. 1, we have him singing of judgment as well as mercy; and so raising the sweetest harmony out of the seeming discord of the most disagreeing attributes. There can be no composition in any thing without some multiplicity and diversity of parts: and therefore we have a catalogue of those gifts, which did, as it were, compound and make up the primitive church, in the 8th, 9th, and 10th verses of this 12th chapter of the 1st to the Corinthians; where the apostle tells us, that *to one is given the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge, to another faith;* with many more such like gifts there reckoned up; and indeed so many and various were the gifts poured out by the Spirit of God upon the first preachers of the gospel, that there is need almost of the gift of tongues to rehearse them.

Of which great variety, as we have hitherto observed the use, so it is intended also for the ornament of the church. I say *ornament:* for I cannot persuade myself that God ever designed his church for a rude, naked, unbeautified lump, or to lay the foundations of purity in the ruins of decency. The entrance and gate of Solomon's temple was called *beautiful:* and as there were several orders of priests and Levites belonging to it, so they had their several offices, their several chambers and apartments in that temple. It was a kind of representation of heaven; in which, our Saviour tells us, there *are many man-*

sions. But, behold! there are wiser, much wiser than Solomon amongst us, who will have it quite otherwise in the Christian church. Nothing of order or distinction, nothing of splendour or dress, must be allowed of here. No, they are all *for lying in the dust before God,* (as their word is,) and therefore will have nothing but dust and nastiness for the church's furniture. To attempt a confutation of such persons would be superfluous; and indeed I have no more to say for those who contend for such a sordid and mean condition of the church, but that in this they do not so much speak their devotion as their education; it being generally found that a slovenly way of breeding disposes men to a kind of slovenly religion.

Much might be spoken by way of analogy between the internal and external, the spiritual and the material ornaments of the church; but both of them serve to dress and set off the spouse of Christ; the first to recommend her to his own eyes, and the latter to the eyes of the world.

Where would be the beauty of the heavens themselves, if it were not for the multitude of the stars, and the variety of their influences? And then for the earth here below, and those who dwell therein, certainly we might live without the plumes of peacocks, and the curious colours of flowers, without so many different odours, so many several tastes, and such an infinite diversity of airs and sounds. But where would then be the glory and lustre of the universe, the flourish and gayety of nature, if our senses were forced to be always poring upon the same things, without the diversion of change, and the quickening

relish of variety? And now, when matters stand thus, may we not justly say, *If God so clothes the fields*, so paints the flowers, and paves the very places we tread upon, and with such curiosity provides for all our senses, which yet are but the servants and under-officers of the soul; shall he not much more provide for the soul itself, and its own service thereby, in the glorious economy and great concernments of the church? And moreover, does not such a liberal effusion of gifts equally argue both the power and the bounty of the giver? Number and multitude are the signs of riches, and the materials of plenty; and therefore, though unity in the government and communion of the church is indeed a great blessing, yet in the gifts and endowments of it, it would be but penury and a curse. But,

Secondly, as this diversity of the Spirit's gifts imports variety, so it excludes contrariety: different they are, but they are not opposite. There is no jar, no combat or contest between them; but all are disposed of with mutual agreements, and a happy subordination: for as variety adorns, so opposition destroys; things most different in nature may yet be united in the same design; and the most distant lines may meet and clasp in the same centre.

As, for instance, one would think that the spirit of meekness and the spirit of zeal stood at that distance of contrariety, as to defy all possibility either of likeness or reconcilement; and yet (as we have already shewn) they both may and do equally serve and carry on the great end and business of religion. And the same Spirit which baptizes with water, baptizes also with fire. It is an art to attain the

same end by several methods; and to make things of a quite contrary operation to concur in one and the same effect.

Come we now to the third and last thing proposed from the words; which is to shew what are the consequences of this emanation of so many and different gifts from one and the same Spirit. I shall instance in four, directly and naturally deducible from it: as,

First, If the Spirit works such variety of gifts, and those in so vast a multitude, and for the most part above the force of nature, certainly it is but rational to conclude, that it is a Being superior to nature, and so may justly challenge to itself a deity. There have been several who have impugned the deity of the Holy Ghost, though not in the same manner; but the principal of them come within these two sorts:

1. Macedonius and his followers, who allowed him to be a person, but denied his deity; affirming him to be the chief angel, the supreme and most excellent of those blessed spirits employed by God in administering the affairs of the church, and conveying good suggestions to the minds of men, and for that cause to be called *the Holy Spirit;* and sometimes simply and κατ' ἐξοχὴν, or by way of eminence, *the Spirit.* And the same was held by one Biddle, an heretic of some note here in England, a little before the restoration; that is to say, while confusion and toleration gave countenance to almost all religions, except the true.

2. But secondly, Socinus and his school deny both the deity of the Holy Ghost and his personal subsistence too; not granting him to be a person, but only the power of God; to wit, that *vis*, or ἐνέργεια,

by which he effects or produces things. And amongst those who assert this, none have given such bold strokes at the deity of the Holy Ghost as Crellius, in his book *de uno Deo Patre*, and his other *de Spiritu Sancto*.

Now to draw forth and insist upon all the arguments and texts of scripture which use to be traversed on both sides in this controversy, would be a thing neither to be done within this compass of time, nor perhaps so proper for this exercise; and therefore let it suffice us, upon the warrant of express scripture, not sophisticated by nice and forced expositions, but plainly interpreted by the general tradition of the church, (to which all private reason ought in reason to give place,) to confess and adore the deity of the Holy Ghost.

Now this Holy Spirit is in the church, as the soul in the natural body: for as the same soul does in and by the several parts of the body exercise several functions and operations; so the Holy Ghost, while he animates the mystical body of Christ, causes in it several gifts and powers, by which he enables it to exert variety of actions. And as in the river Nilus, it is the same fountain which supplies the seven streams; so when we read of the seven spirits, Revelation iv. 5, they are but so many several gifts of the same Spirit, all bearing the name and title of their donor; as it is usual for so many several volumes to bear the single denomination of their author; and we say, properly enough, that such an one has read Cicero or Plutarch, when he has read their works.

But now surely this glorious Person or Being, who thus enlightens the minds of all men coming into

the world, in some measure, and of the church more especially, cannot be in the rank and number of created beings. The heathens attributed a kind of divinity or godhead to springs, because of that continual inexhaustible emanation from them, resembling a kind of infinity. But here we see the very gifts of the Spirit to be divine: and where we find such a divinity in the stream, certainly we may well ascribe it in a more transcendent manner to the fountain. Besides, if the Holy Ghost were not God, I cannot see how our bodies could be well called his temples; since none but God can challenge to himself the prerogative of a temple. And so much for the first consequent. But,

Secondly, This great diversity of the Spirit's gifts may read a lecture of humility to some, and of contentment to others. God indeed, in this great scheme of the creation, has drawn some capital letters, set forth some masterpieces, and furnished them with higher abilities than ordinary, and given them gifts, as it were, with both hands: but for all that, none can brag of a monopoly of them, none has so absolutely engrossed them all, as to be that thing of which we may say, Here we see, what and how much God can do. No, God has wrote upon no created being the utmost stint of his power, but only the free issues and products of his pleasure. God has made no man *in opprobrium naturæ*, only to overlook his fellow-creatures, to upbraid them with their defects, and to discourage them with the amazing distance of the comparison. He has filled no man's intellectuals so full, but he has left some vacuities in them, that may sometimes send him for supplies to minds of a much lower pitch. He has

stocked no land or country with such universal plenty, without the mixture of some wants, to be the ground and cause of commerce: for mutual wants, and mutual perfections together, are the bond and cement of conversation. The vast knowledge and ruling abilities of Moses might yet stand in need of Aaron's elocution: and he who speaks with the tongue of angels, and the greatest fluency of spiritual rhetoric, may yet be at a loss when he comes to matters of controversy, and to assert the truth against the assaults and sophistry of a subtle opponent. God indeed can, and sometimes happily does, unite both these gifts in the same person: but where he does not, let not him who can preach, condemn him who can only dispute; neither let him who can dispute, despise him who can only preach: for (as we have shewn before) the church is served by both, and has equally need of some men to speak and declare the word, and of others to defend it: it being enough, and too often more than enough, for one man to maintain what another says. In which work, the speaking part is indeed the more easy, but the defensive the more glorious.

And, as this may give some check to the presumption of the most raised understandings, so it should prevent the despondency of the meanest: for the apostle makes this very use of it in the 21st and 22d verses; where he would not have even the lowest and poorest member of the church to be dejected upon the consideration of what it wants, but rather be comforted in the sense of what it has. Let not the foot trample upon itself, because it does not rule the body, but consider, that it has the honour to support it: nay, the greatest abilities are

sometimes beholding to the very meanest, if but for this only, that without them they would want the gloss and lustre of a foil. The two talents went into heaven as easily as the five: and God has put a peculiar usefulness even into the smallest members of the body, answerable to some need or defect in the greatest; thereby to level them to a mutual intercourse of compliance and benefaction; which alone can keep things equal, and is indeed the very poise and ballast of society. And thus much for the second consequent. But,

Thirdly, The foregoing doctrine affords us also a touchstone for the trial of spirits: for such as are the gifts, such must be also the spirit from which they flow: and since both of them have been so much pretended to, it is well for the church, that it has the rule of judgment, and a note of discrimination. There is none, who is not wilfully a stranger to the affairs of our Israel, but has had the noise and blusters of gifted brethren, and of persons pretending to the Spirit, ringing in his ears. Concerning which plea of theirs, since we all know that there are spirits both good and bad, it cannot be denied, but that in some sense they might have the spirit, such a spirit as it was, and that in a very large measure: but as for their gifts, we must examine them by the standard of those here mentioned by the apostle.

And first, for that of prophecy: these men were once full of a prophecy that the world should be destroyed in the year 1656; because, forsooth, the flood came upon the old world in that year reckoning from the creation. And again, that the downfal of Pope and Antichrist, together with that of monarchy and episcopacy, (which they always ac-

counted as limbs of Antichrist,) should be in the year 1666. And that because some remarkable mention is made of the number 666 in the Revelation; with many other such like predictions: the event of all which has shewn, that those men were not of God's privy council; but, on the contrary, that all their prophecies were like those of almanacks, which warn every wise body to prepare against foul weather, by their foretelling fair.

And then, for the gift of healing, let a bleeding church and state shew, how notably they were gifted that way. They played the chirurgeons indeed with a witness, but we never yet heard that they acted the physician; all their practice upon the body politic was with powder and ball, sword and pistol. No saving of life with those men, but by purging away the estate.

And likewise for the gift of discerning of spirits: they had their triers, that is, a court appointed for the trial of ministers; but most properly called Cromwell's inquisition; in which they would pretend to know men's hearts, and inward *bent of their spirits* (as their word was) by their very looks. But the truth is, as the chief pretence of those triers was to inquire into men's gifts; so if they found them but well gifted in the hand, they never looked any further; for a full and free hand was with them an abundant demonstration of a *gracious heart;* a word in great request in those times.

And moreover, for the gift of diverse tongues, it is certain, that they scarce spake the same thing for two days together. Though otherwise it must be confessed, that they were none of the greatest linguists; their own mother tongue serving all their

occasions, without ever so much as looking into the fathers, who always spoke the language of the beast to such as could not understand them. Latin was with them a mortal crime, and Greek, instead of being owned for the language of the Holy Ghost, (as in the New Testament it is,) was looked upon like the sin against it; so that, in a word, they had all the confusions of Babel amongst them without the diversity of tongues.

And then, lastly, for the gift of interpreting; they thought themselves no ordinary men at expounding a chapter; if the turning of a few rational, significant words and sentences into a loose, tedious, impertinent harangue could be called an exposition. But above all, for their interpreting gift, you must take them upon Ezekiel, Daniel, and the Revelation; and from thence, as it were, out of a dark prophetic cloud, thundering against the old cavaliers and the Church of England, and (as I may but too appositely express it) breaking them upon the wheels in Ezekiel, casting them to the beasts in Daniel, and pouring upon them all the vials in the Revelation. After which let any one deny it who durst, that the black decree was absolutely passed upon those malignants, and that they were all of them, to a man, sons of reprobation.

And thus, I think, I have reckoned up most of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, and compared them with those of our late gifted brethren. Amongst all which divine gifts, I must declare, that I cannot find the gift of canting and whining, and making faces; that is, of speaking bad sense with worse looks; which yet those men used to call *the language of Canaan*. Nor can I find the gift of utter-

ing every sudden, crude, undigested thought coming over their minds, and of being impudently bold and familiar with Almighty God in prayer.

I cannot find the gift of exploding the mysteries, and peculiar *credenda* of the Gospel, in order to the turning Christianity into bare morality.

I cannot find the gift of accounting tenderness of conscience against law, as a thing sacred, but tenderness of conscience according to law, as a crime to be prosecuted almost to death.

In a word, I cannot find the gifts of [a] rebelling, plundering, sequestering, robbing churches, and murdering kings, and all this purely for the sake of conscience and religion.

These things, I say, (whether it be through the weakness of my discerning faculties, or whatsoever else may be the cause,) I cannot, for my life, find amongst the primitive gifts of the Spirit.

And therefore, wheresoever I do find them, let men talk never so much of inward motions and extraordinary calls of the Spirit, of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and of the public good, of moderation, and of an healing spirit, and the like; yet, long and sad experience having taught us the true meaning of all these fine and fallacious terms, I must needs say, both of them, and the spirit from which they proceed, in those words of St. James iii. 18, *that they descend not from above, but are earthly, sensual, and devilish.* These are the names which

[a] Notwithstanding the sanctified character they bear in the republicans' new Gospel, *viz.* Ludlow's Memoirs; and in the judgment of those who like such practices, and therefore publish such books, to the manifest affront of the monarchy they live under: a strange unaccountable way doubtless of supporting it.

God knows and calls them by, though schismatics and hypocrites may call them reformation. But,

Fourthly, In the fourth and last place, this emanation of gifts from the Spirit assures us that knowledge and learning are by no means opposite to grace; since we see gifts as well as graces conferred by the same Spirit. But amongst those of the late reforming age, (whom we have been speaking of,) all learning was utterly cried down. So that with them the best preachers were such as could not read, and the ablest divines such as could not write. In all their preachments they so highly pretended to the Spirit, that they could hardly so much as spell the letter. To be *blind* was with them the proper qualification of a spiritual *guide*, and to be *book-learned*, as they called it, and to be *irreligious*, were almost terms convertible. None were thought fit for the ministry but tradesmen and mechanics, because none else were allowed to have the Spirit. Those only were accounted like St. Paul, who could *work with their hands*, and in a literal sense *drive the nail home*, and be able to make a pulpit, before they preached in it.

But the Spirit in the primitive church took quite another method, being still as careful to furnish the head as to sanctify the heart; and as he wrought miracles to found and establish a church by these extraordinary gifts, so it would have been a greater miracle to have done it without them.

God, as he is the giver of grace, so he is the *father of lights;* he neither admits darkness in himself, nor approves it in others. And therefore those who place all religion in the heats of a furious zeal, without the due illuminations of knowledge, know

not of what spirit they are; indeed of such a spirit as begins in darkness, leads to it, and ends in it.

But certainly we shall one day find, that a religion so much resembling hell, neither was nor could be the readiest way to heaven. But on the contrary, that the Spirit always guides and instructs before he saves; and that, as he brings to happiness only by the ways of holiness, so he never leads to true holiness, but by the paths of knowledge.

To which Holy Spirit, together with the Father and the Son, three Persons and one God, be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

The peculiar care and concern of Providence for the protection and defence of kings,

SET FORTH IN

A SERMON

PREACHED AT WESTMINSTER ABBEY,

NOVEMBER 5, 1675.

PSALM cxliv. 10.

It is he that giveth salvation unto kings.

THE greatest and most magnificent title, by which God exhibits himself to the sons of men, is, that he is King of kings, and that the governors of the earth are his subjects, princes and emperors his vassals, and thrones his footstools; and consequently that there is no absolute monarch in the world but one. And from the same also it follows, that there is nothing, which subjects can justly expect from their prince, but princes may expect from God; and nothing which princes demand from their subjects, but God, in a higher manner and by a better claim, requires from them. Now the relation between prince and subject essentially involves in it these two things:

First, Obedience from the subject to all the laws and just commands of his prince. And accordingly, as kings themselves have a sovereign over them, so they have laws over them too: laws which lay the

same obligation upon crowned heads, that they do upon the meanest peasant: for no prerogative can bar piety: no man is too *great* to be bound to be *good*. He who wields the sceptre, and shines in the throne, has a great account to make, and a great Master to make it to: and there is no man sent into the world to rule, who is not sent also to obey.

Secondly. The other thing imported in this relation, is protection vouchsafed from the sovereign to the subject. Upon which account it is, that as God with one hand gives a law, so with the other he defends the obedient. And this is the highest prerogative of worldly empire, and the brightest jewel in the diadems of princes, that by being God's immediate subjects they are his immediate care, and entitled to his more especial protection; that they have both an omniscience, in a peculiar manner, to wake over them, and an omnipotence to support them; and that they are not the legions which they command, but the God whom they obey, who must both guard their persons and secure their regalia. For *it is he*, and he only, *who giveth salvation unto kings.*

The words of the text, with a little variation, run naturally into this one proposition, which, containing in it the full sense of them, shall be the subject of our following discourse, *viz.*

That God in the government of the world exercises a peculiar and extraordinary providence over the persons and lives of princes.

The prosecution of which proposition shall lie in these four things.

First, To shew upon what account any act of God's providence may be said to be peculiar and extraordinary.

Secondly, To shew how and by what means God does after such an extraordinary manner save and deliver princes.

Thirdly, To shew the reasons why he does so. And,

Fourthly and lastly, To draw something by way of inference and conclusion from the whole.

Of all which in their order: and,

First, for the first of these; which is to shew upon what account any act of God's providence may be said to be peculiar and extraordinary. Providence in the government of the world acts for the most part by the mediation of second causes: which, though they proceed according to a principle of nature, and a settled course and tenor of acting, (supposing still the same circumstances,) yet Providence acting by them may, in several instances of it, be said to be extraordinary, upon a threefold account: as,

First, When a thing falls out besides the common and usual operation of its proper cause. As for instance, it is usual and natural for a man meeting his enemy upon full advantage, to prosecute that advantage against him, and by no means to let him escape: yet sometimes it falls out quite otherwise. Esau had conceived a mortal grudge and enmity against his brother Jacob; yet as soon as he meets him, he falls upon him in a very different way from that of enemies, and embraces him. Ahab having upon conquest got Benhadad, his inveterate enemy, into his hands, not only spares his life, but treats him kindly, and lets him go. That a brother unprovoked should hate, and a stranger not obliged should love, is against the usual actings of the heart of man.

Yet thus it was with Joseph, and no doubt with many others. In which, and the like cases, I conceive, things so falling out, may be said to come to pass by an extraordinary act of Providence; it being manifest, that the persons concerned in them do not act, as men of the same principles and interests under the same circumstances use to do. For interest, we say, will not lie, nor make a man false to himself, whatsoever it may make him to others.

Secondly. Providence may be said to act extraordinarily, when a thing falls out beside or contrary to the design of expert, politic, and shrewd persons, contriving or acting in it. As when a man by the utmost of his wit and skill projects the compassing of such or such a thing, fits means to his end, lays antecedents and consequents directly and appositely for the bringing about his purpose; but in the issue and result finds all broken and baffled, and the event contrary to his intention; and the order of causes and counsels so studiously framed by him, to produce an effect opposite to, and destructive of, the design driven at by those means and arts. In this case also, I say, we may rationally acknowledge an extraordinary act of Providence: forasmuch as the man himself is made instrumental to the effecting of something perfectly against his own will and judgment, and that by those very ways and methods which in themselves were the most proper to prevent, and the most unlikely to bring to pass, such an event. The world all the while standing amazed at it, and the credit of the politician sinking: for that nothing seems to cast so just a reproach even upon reason itself, as for persons noted for it to act as notably against it.

Thirdly and lastly. Providence may be said to act in an extraordinary way, when a thing comes to pass visibly and apparently beyond the power of the cause immediately employed in it. As that a man dumb all his life before, should on the sudden speak: as it is said that the son of Crœsus did, upon the sight of a murder ready to have been committed upon the person of his prince and father. That a small company should rout and scatter an army, or (in the language of scripture) that *one should chase an hundred, and an hundred put ten thousand to flight.* That persons of mean parts, and little or no experience, should frustrate and overreach the counsels of old, beaten, thoroughpaced politicians. These effects, I say, are manifestly above the ability and stated way of working belonging to the causes from whence they flow. Nevertheless such things are sometimes seen upon the great stage of the world, to the wonder and astonishment of the beholders, who are wholly unable, by the common method and discourses of reason, to give a satisfactory account of these strange phenomena, by resolving them into any thing visible in their immediate agents: in which case, therefore, I conceive, that the whole order and connection of these things one with another, may be reckoned an act of Providence extraordinary.

And thus much for the first general thing proposed, which was to shew upon what account the works of Providence come to be thus distinguished: which consideration it will be easy for every one to make application of to the ensuing particulars. I proceed now to the

Second general thing proposed; which is to shew,

How and by what means God does after such an extraordinary manner save and deliver princes.

I shall mention seven.

1. By endowing them with a more than ordinary sagacity and quickness of understanding above other men. Kings, they say, have a long reach with their arm, but they have a further with their mind. In 1 Kings iv. 29, God is said to have given Solomon *largeness of heart, even as the sand on the seashore.* And in Prov. xxv. 3, *the heart of kings* is said to be *unsearchable.* In the former text the royal mind is compared to the sand on the seashore for compass, and in this latter it may seem to vie with the sea itself for depth. And does not this day's solemnity give us an eminent proof of this? For when this horrid conspiracy, contrived in hell and darkness, was conveyed to one of the confederates under the shelter of an equivocal writing, our apprehensive and quickscented king presently smoked the ambiguous paper, and sounding the depths of the black intrigue, found that at the bottom of it, which few mortals besides (though of the quickest faculties) could have discovered from it, who had not had their conjectures alarmed by some glimmerings of light into that dark project before. Such a piercing judgment does God often give to these his deputies: a judgment which looks into, or rather through and through all others, but is looked into by none.

And there is nothing that both adorns and secures a prince comparably to this discerning faculty: for by this, as by a great light kindling many others, he commands the use of the best understandings and

judgments throughout his dominions, calling them to his council, and so seeing with their eyes, apprehending and contriving with their heads; all their knowledge and experience, like rivers paying tribute to the ocean, being conveyed into and swallowed up in his royal breast. It is both the safety and felicity of a prince to have a wise council, but it must be his own wisdom which provides him one. Wisdom is a noble quality, and not discernible but by itself. It is art that must judge of art; and he who discovers wisdom in another, must do it by the idea he first had of it in his own brain. Now as the first and chief external safeguard of a prince is in his council, and as it is his discerning faculty which must furnish him with this, so his next safety is in the choice of his friends: and it is the same discerning faculty which must secure him here too. For it is this that must distinguish between friendship and flattery, the most baneful mischief that can be practised by one man upon another; and shadows do not more inseparably follow bodies, than flattery does the persons of great men. Flatterers are the bosom enemies of princes, laying trains for them, not at all less destructive than that which was discovered this day; contriving their ruin acceptably, pleasingly, and according to their own hearts' desire. Poison has frequently destroyed kings, but none has been so efficaciously mortal as that drank in by the ear. He who meets his enemy in the field, knows how to encounter him; but he who meets him at his table, in his chamber, or in his closet, finds his enemy got within him before he is aware of him, killing him with smiles and kisses, and acting the assassinate

under the masquerade of a counsellor or a confident: the surest, but the basest way of destroying a man.

But now, it is the prince's wisdom and discerning spirit, that must be his rescue from the plots of this friendly traitor. It is a most remarkable speech of Solomon, Prov. xx. 8, *that the king sitting on the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eye.* And the nature of this evil is peculiarly such, that to discover, is to defeat it. It is a work of darkness, which the light never looks upon, but it scatters too.

Nothing is so notable in the royal bird, the eagle, as the quickness of his eye. The sight is the sense of empire and command; that which is always first, and leads the way in every great action: for so far as a prince sees, so far properly he rules; and while he keeps his eye open, and his breast shut, he cannot be surprised.

And thus much for the first way by which Providence saves and delivers princes; namely, by endowing them with a more than ordinary sagacity and quickness of understanding above other men.

2. God saves and delivers sovereign princes by giving them a singular courage and presence of mind in cases of difficulty and danger. As soon as ever the sacred oil had anointed Saul king, it is said, 1 Sam. x. 9, *that God gave him another heart;* that is, a great and a kingly spirit, raising his thoughts above the common level and designs of a private condition. And a little after, when there was a general consternation over all Israel, upon the invasion of the Ammonites, though the report of it

met Saul in his former mean employment, coming from the field after his father's herd; yet it is said, in the 11th chapter of the same book, and verse 6, *that the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard these tidings;* that is, the royal spirit, which he had received at his anointing, then began to stir and act, and flame out like itself; taking him presently from following an herd, and putting him in the head of an army. It is incredible to consider the motion of some minds upon the sudden surprise of danger; and how much in such cases some will even outact themselves; how much quicker their wit is to invent, and their courage to execute, than at other times. Tullus Hostilius, in the midst of a battle, surprised with the treachery of Metius Suffetius falling off with a great part of his army to the enemy, cries out to his soldiers, that it was by his order, and thereby confirmed their hearts from fainting through the apprehension of treachery, into a present and glorious victory, by their supposing it a contrived stratagem.

Next to wisdom, the greatest gift of Heaven is resolution. It is that which gives and obtains kingdoms, that turns swords into sceptres, that crowns the valiant with victory, and the victorious often with a diadem. It was answered by a neighbouring prince to one alleging a flaw in the title of Henry VII. to the kingdom of England, that he had three of the best titles to his kingdom of any prince living; being the wisest prince, the valiantest prince, and the richest prince in Christendom.

Presence of mind to get out of a plunge, and upon the sudden to unravel the knots and intricacies of a perplexed business, argues a head and a heart made

for great things. It is a kind of ecstasy and inspiration, a beam of divine light darting in upon reason, and exalting it to a pitch of operation beyond its natural and accustomed measures; and perhaps there was never any person in the world remarkably and heroically great, without some such kind of enthusiasm; that is, such a mighty principle, as at certain times raised him up to strange unaccountable heights of wit and courage. And therefore whosoever he is, who in the strength of such a spirit can look the most menacing dangers in the face, and when the state of all things about him seems desperate can yet bear his great heart above despair, such an one for the most part makes fortune itself bend and fall down to him, difficulties vanish, and dangers fly before him; so much is victory the claim of the valiant, and success the birthright of the bold. And this is the second way by which Providence *gives salvation unto kings.*

3. God saves and delivers sovereign princes, by disposing of events and accidents, in a strange concurrence for their advantage and preservation. Nothing indeed is or can be properly accidental to God; but accidents are so called in respect of the intention or expectation of second causes; when things fall out beside their knowledge or design. And there is nothing in which Providence so much triumphs over, and, as I may so say, laughs at the profoundest wisdom of men, as in the stable, certain knowledge and disposal of all casual events. In respect of which, the clearest mortal intellect is wholly in the dark. And upon this account, as loose as these events seem to hang upon one another, yet they are all knit and linked together in a firm chain,

and the highest link of that chain, as the poets speak most truly and philosophically, (though in a fable,) is fastened to Jupiter's chair; that is, it is held and managed by an unerring Providence: the chain indeed may wave and shake this way and that way, but still the hand that holds it is steady, and the eye that guides it infallible.

Now nothing has so powerful an influence upon the great turns of affairs, and the lives and fortunes of great persons, as the little, unobserved, unprojected events of things. For could any thing be greater than the preservation of a great prince and his next heir to the crown, together with his nobles and the chief of his clergy, from certain, imminent, and prepared destruction? And was not all this effected by a pitiful small accident in the mistake of the superscription of a letter? Did not the oversight of one syllable preserve a church and a state too? And might it not be truly said of that contemptible paper, that it did *Cæsarem vehere et fortunam Cæsaris*, and that the fate of three kingdoms was wrapt and sealed up in it?

A little error of the eye, a misguidance of the hand, a slip of the foot, a starting of an horse, a sudden mist, or a great shower, or a word undesignedly cast forth in an army, has turned the stream of victory from one side to another, and thereby disposed of the fortunes of empires and whole nations. No prince ever returns safe out of a battle, but may remember how many blows and bullets[a] have gone by

[a] See a late signal instance of this in a prince, "who had "his shoulder so kindly kissed "by a cannon bullet," (as the late archbishop, by a peculiar strain of rhetoric, expresses this wonderful passage in his sermon at court, upon Jeremiah

him, that might as easily have gone through him, and by what little odd unforeseeable chances death has been turned aside, which seemed in a full, ready, and direct career to have been posting to him. All which passages, if we do not acknowledge to have been guided to their respective ends and effects by the conduct of a superior and a divine hand, we do by the same assertion cashier all providence, strip the Almighty of his noblest prerogative, and make God, not the governor, but the mere spectator of the world. And thus much for the third way. The

Fourth, by which God saves and delivers sovereign princes, is by wonderfully inclining the hearts and wills of men to a benign affection towards them. Hearts and wills are things that princes themselves cannot command, and yet the only things in the strength of which they do command. For the heart is the grand spring of action, and he who governs that part, does by consequence command the whole. But now this is the incommunicable prerogative of God; who, and who only, can either by power or by knowledge reach the heart. For as it is said, Prov. xxi. 1, *that the heart of the king is in God's hand, and that as the rivers of water he turneth it which way soever he will;* so are the hearts of the people too; which, like a mighty stream or torrent, he turns this way or that way, according to the wise counsels of his providence. For if he intends to advance a prince, they shall be a stream to

ix. 23, 24. page 34.) For well indeed might it pass for wonderful; the salutes from the mouth of a cannon being commonly so boisterous, that they seldom kiss, but they kill too.

bear him up from sinking; if to forsake or ruin a prince, they shall overflow, and swell, and rush in upon him with such a furious, ungoverned tide, as no power or arts of state shall be able to divert or to withstand. God can turn the hearts of a nation suddenly and irresistibly. He has done so more than once or twice, and may do so again.

Thus for instance, when David fled before Absalom, and was forced to leave the royal city, it was the general affection of his people (God touching their hearts) which brought him back, and resettled him in his throne; so that, in 2 Sam. xix. 14, it is said of him, *that he bowed the hearts of all the men of Judah, even as the heart of one man; so that they sent this word unto the king, Return thou, and all thy servants.* And just such another message did the lords and commons of England send our banished David in the year sixty. For what was it else which so gloriously restored the king? Plots were nothing, and foreign assistance less than nothing. It was an universal, invincible current of the people's wills and affections, that bore down all those mountains of opposition, which so many years had been raising up against him, and at length (in spite of guilt and malice) brought him in free and unshackled, absolute and victorious over the heads of his armed enemies. It was his people's hearts which made their hands useless to his restoration.

On the other side, when the greatest part of the kingdom was rent from the house of David, and transferred to Jeroboam, in 1 Kings xii. 24, the prophet expressly tells them, *that this thing was from God;* that is, he, by a secret overruling energy upon the hearts and affections of the people, took

them off from one, and inclined and carried them over to the other. And it is often by this alone, that the great Lord of lords and Controller of monarchs *putteth down one, and setteth up another.* He can raise armies of hearts to drive any king out of his kingdom without striking a stroke; as on the contrary, where he intends to own and support the royal estate of any monarch, he shall set him up a throne in every one of his subjects' breasts. So that, according to that scripture-expression, *their desire shall be to him, and he shall rule over them.* And certainly where affection binds, allegiance must needs be very easy; and a pleasant thing to rule, where there is no heart to resist.

5. God saves and delivers sovereign princes by rescuing them from unseen and unknown mischiefs prepared against them. This is most evident: for if a prince's own observation can bear witness to many deliverances vouchsafed him by Providence, Providence itself can certainly bear witness to many more which he is wholly ignorant of. Forasmuch as in every man, but especially in princes, their concerns reach further, and carry a wider compass, than their knowledge can: it being impossible that any man living should know all that is spoken or done concerning him, and consequently be aware of all the mischievous blows levelled against him. How many secret cabals and plots have been against the reputation, the interest, and sometimes the life also of every considerable person in the world, which never yet came to their eye or their ear, nor (thanks to the care of a guardian Providence) ever troubled so much as a thought, nor hurt so much as an hair of their head! And yet the contrivers of them have wanted neither

will, nor wit, nor power (the natural force of causes considered) to add execution to intention, and to give fire to their trains, and efficacy to their cursed projects, had not an invisible, overswaying power baffled and disappointed all the artifices of their malice, and stifled the base conception before the birth.

And this is a way of deliverance so eminent for the mercy of it, that if a prince or great person can be obliged to Providence for any, it must be for this. For when a man knows the danger he is in, all his senses quickly take the alarm, call up the spirits, and arm his courage to meet the approaching evil, and to defend himself. But when he knows nothing of the impending mischief, he lies open and defenceless, like a man bound, and naked, and sleeping, while a dagger is directed to his breast. And for a merciful tender Providence then to step in to his assistance, to ward off the fatal blow, and to turn the approaching edge from his unguarded heart, this surely is the height of mercy, and engrosses the glory of the deliverance wholly to the divine goodness, without allowing any mortal wit or courage the least share or concurrence in it. No prince can tell what the discontents of ill subjects, the emulation of neighbour states or princes have been designing, endeavouring, and projecting against him: all which counsels, by a controlling power from above, have from time to time been made abortive and frustraneous. Let princes, therefore, reckon upon this, and know assuredly, that they stand indebted to Providence for more deliverances than they can know. And if the protecting mercies of Heaven thus surpass their knowledge, surely it is but reason that their

sense of them and gratitude for them should surmount expression.

Sixthly. God saves and delivers sovereign princes by imprinting a certain awe and dread of their persons and authority upon the minds of their subjects. And there is not any one thing which seems so manifestly to prove government a thing perfectly divine, both as to its original and continuance in the world, as this. For what is there in any one mortal man that can strike a dread into, and command a subjection from, so many thousands as every prince almost has under his government, should things be rated according to the mere natural power of second causes? For the strength of one man can do nothing against so many; and his wisdom and counsel but little more: and those who are to obey him know so much; and yet for all that, they yield him absolute subjection, dread his threatenings, tremble at his frowns, and lay their necks under his feet. Now from whence can all this be, but from a secret work of the divine power, investing sovereign princes with certain marks and rays of that divine image, which overawes and controls the spirits of men they know not how nor why? But yet they feel themselves actually wrought upon and kept under by them, and that very frequently against their will.

And this is that properly which in kings we call *majesty*, and which no doubt is a kind of shadow or portraiture of the divine authority drawn upon the looks and persons of princes, which makes them commanders of men's fears, and thereby capable of governing them in all their concerns. *Non fero fulgur oculorum tuorum*, is the language of every subject's heart, struck with the awful aspect of a re-

solute and magnanimous prince. There is a majesty in his countenance that puts lightning into his looks and thunder into his words. In Dan. v. 19, it is said of Nebuchadnezzar, that *God gave him such a majesty, that all people, nations, and languages trembled before him.* When Alexander the Great found his whole army in a mutiny, and resolute not to march forward, but to return to their own country, against any arguments or persuasions that he could use, he [b]leaps down from the place upon which he had been speaking to them and arguing with them, and laying hold of thirteen of the most forward and violent mutineers, causes them to be bound hand and foot, (in the face of his whole army looking on,) and then thrown into the sea. All which this terrible and victorious army, to which he himself owed his greatness, and which but even now was upon such high and daring terms with him, quietly sees and suffers, and with a sneaking abject behaviour return to their tents, as if a lion had charged and chased a flock of sheep into their folds. Nay, the history says further, that they were fearful and solicitous, and inquisitive what the king meant to do with the rest of them. By which and the like passages, kings may see what they are, and what they may do, if they will but own their high office with an equal courage, and be true to that sovereignty and character which God has stamped upon them. Alexander, as great as he was, was but one man: but he was a prince, and as such acted by a commission from heaven, as one of the Almighty's vicegerents, and upon that account able

[b] At the same time uttering these words, (so suitable to his kingly mind and courage,) *Jam scietis, et quantum sine rege valeat exercitus, et quid opis in me uno sit.* Quint. Curtius, lib. x.

to encounter as well as to lead his army. A king, acting as a king, has all the power of heaven to bear him out; the stars in their courses shall fight for him; the angels are his guards, and the Lord of hosts their captain. And this is the sixth way by which God saves and delivers princes; namely, by the authority and majesty of their persons.

7. In the seventh and last place. God saves and delivers sovereign princes, by disposing their hearts to such virtuous and pious courses, as he has promised a blessing to, and by restraining them from those ways to which he has denounced a curse. And this is the greatest deliverance of all; as having a prospect upon the felicity of both worlds, and laying a foundation for all other deliverances. For it is this that qualifies and renders a man a subject capable of and fit for a deliverance. King Abimelech was about to do an action that would certainly have drawn death and confusion after it: *Thou art but a dead man*, says God to him, in Gen. xx. 3. But preventing grace snatched him from the brink of destruction, and delivered him from death by restraining him from the sin: *I withheld thee*, says God in the 6th, *from sinning against me*. See the force of princely piety in the person of Hezekiah. God tells him that *he should die*, and bids him prepare for it. But piety is stronger than death, and reverses the fatal edict. The Assyrians invade his kingdom, and take his fenced cities, but how does he withstand them? Why, he puts on sackcloth for his armour; and it was neither the valour nor the number of his troops, but the prayer of Hezekiah, and the irresistible force of a king fighting upon his knees, that routed Sennacherib.

Virtue entitles a prince to all the mercies of heaven, all the favours, all the endearments of Providence. It has a present and a future influence; one upon his person, the other upon his posterity. So that in 1 Kings xi. when God declared his purpose to remove the kingdom from the house of Solomon, for all his idolatries and abominations, yet in the 34th verse he says, *Howbeit I will make him king all the days of his life, for my servant David's sake, because he kept my commandments and my statutes.* And in the 32d verse he declares, *that his son after him should have one tribe for his servant David's sake.* Nay, the piety of a king diffuses a blessing and a protection upon the whole kingdom: for how often, upon the provocations of Judah, did the memory of David's piety, as it were, disarm the divine vengeance, and interpose between them and the destroying sentence! So that, in the second book of Kings, it is said three several times, upon three several remarkable occasions, that God *would not destroy Judah and Jerusalem for his servant David's sake.* And who knows but the piety, the virtues, and the Christian sufferings of the late martyred king, may be one great preservative of the present peace of this wretched and ungrateful nation? So that when God lately sent his destroying angel, with his drawn sword, over Poland, Germany, Holland, and other countries, he has looked upon the blood of that royal martyr shed for the rights and liberties of his kingdoms, and bid the destroying angel pass over England, and draw no more blood there, where the memory of that sacred blood had made such an atonement and expiation, and cried aloud for mercy upon all, even those that shed it not

excepted. Certain it is, that the virtues of a prince are a blessing to more than to himself and his family. They are a public seminary of blessings; they are the palladiums and the strong holds, nay the common stock and the inheritance of the kingdom, and, in a word, an exchequer that can never be shut up.

And thus much for the second general thing proposed, which was to shew the several ways and means by which God does, after such an extraordinary manner, save and deliver sovereign princes: all which, for memory's sake, it may not be amiss to rehearse and sum up in short: as, namely, he delivers them,

1. By endowing them with a more than ordinary sagacity and quickness of understanding above other men.

2. By giving them a singular courage and presence of mind in cases of difficulty and danger.

3. By disposing of events and accidents in a strange concurrence for their advantage and preservation.

4. By wonderfully inclining the hearts and wills of men to a benign affection towards them.

5. By rescuing them from unseen and unknown mischiefs prepared against them.

6. By imprinting a certain awe and dread of their persons and authority upon the minds of the people.

7. Seventhly and lastly. By disposing their hearts to such virtuous and pious courses as God has promised a blessing to, and by restraining them from those ways to which he has denounced a curse. And these are the several ways by which Providence *gives salvation unto kings.*

I proceed now to the

Third general thing proposed, which is to shew

the reasons why Providence is so much concerned in the salvation and deliverance of kings: which that we may the better do, we must know, that there are two things by which God supports the societies of mankind, which he will certainly maintain and preserve, as long as he suffers the world to last, and men to live in it; and these are government and religion; which being so, I suppose, we need allege no other reason for God's peculiar care over the persons and lives of sovereign princes, if we demonstrate,

1. That they are the greatest instruments in the hand of Providence to support government and civil society in the world. And,

2. That they have the most powerful influence upon the concerns of religion and the preservation of the church, of all other persons whatsoever.

And first for the first of these; That kings are the greatest instruments in the hand of Providence to support government and civil society in the world: the proof of which, I conceive, will be fully made out by these two things.

1. By shewing that monarchy, or kingly government, is the most excellent and best adapted to the ends of government and the benefit of society. And,

2. That the greatness or strength of a monarchy depends chiefly upon the personal qualifications of the prince or monarch.

1. And first, let us shew that monarchy or kingly government is the most excellent and best adapted to the ends of government and the benefit of society. This is too large and noble a subject to be fully managed in such a discourse. At present let it suffice to say, that monarchy, in the kind of government, is the first, and consequently the most perfect of all

other sorts. It is an image of the divine supremacy, man's imitation of Providence, a copy of God's government of the universe in a lesser draught. For the world has but one sovereign ruler, as well as but one maker; and every prince is both his lieutenant and his resemblance too. The excellency of any government consists in the natural firmness of its constitution, freeing it from the principles of dissolution. And the dissolution of government, as of most other things, proceeds chiefly from the internal fightings and conflicts of contrary parts. But now unity excludes contrariety, and that which is but one cannot disagree or jar with itself. It is multitude only that admits of the contests of particulars, and a commonwealth, where governors cannot govern themselves. That which like a worm eats out the very heart of government, is the emulation, the ambition, and the discord of the parties invested with it. But the supremacy placed in one cuts off all these: for no man is his own rival, no man envies himself, or designs to trip up his own heels, whatsoever he may chance to do.

And to shew the naturalness of monarchy, all other forms of government insensibly partake of it, and slide into it. For look upon any aristocracy or democracy, and still you shall find some one ruling active person amongst the rest, who does every thing, and carries all before him. Was not De Wit, amongst our neighbours, a kind of king in a commonwealth? And was not that usurper here amongst ourselves a monarch in reality of fact, before he wore the title or assumed the office? Moreover, when any commonwealth is forced to defend itself by war, it finds it necessary to appoint one general over all,

as this very commonwealth found to its cost, and to make the conduct of its armies at least monarchical. Nay, the Romans themselves, in their greatest exigencies of state, had recourse to their dictatorship, which was a perfect monarchy for the time. And when they sent out their armies under the conduct of two consuls, yet those consuls were to command the whole army by turns, one one day, and another another; which was a tacit confession of the necessity of a single conduct for the right management of great affairs. And I think, upon a full survey of the Roman story, we may truly pronounce, that the greatest defeats that were ever given that commonwealth, in any lasting war, have been from this, that the custom of shifting consuls every year hindered the conduct of the whole war from being continued in the hands of one experienced commander. In their wars with Hannibal, nothing is more manifest. From all which I infer, that kingly government is the most natural, excellent, and beneficial to society of all others: and that in every commonwealth, (in spite of its constitution,) there will be something of monarchy; and that if a republic ever achieves any thing great or considerable, it is still by virtue of something in it that is monarchical.

Secondly, The next thing is to shew, that the greatness or strength of a monarchy depends chiefly upon the personal qualifications of the prince or monarch. It ebbs or flows according to the rising or falling of his spirit. For still it is the person that makes the place considerable, and not the place him. And we shall find in every government, that the activity and bravery of the prince is the soul politic which animates and upholds all. When Alexander

the Great died, the Grecian monarchy expired with him. He was both the emperor and the empire too. And after the death of Julius and Augustus Cæsar, those great commanding souls, the Roman empire declined every day, falling into the hands of brutes and sots, who could scarce wield the weight of their own bellies, and much less the burden of such vast dominions. The present grandeur of the papacy is entirely owing to the prudence and governing arts of some of the popes; and it never suffered any great blow, but when a weak or a voluptuous person sat in the chair. And here amongst ourselves, both the protector and the new protectorship died in one man, though the name indeed survived a while in another; and it was quickly seen, how ridiculous it was for any one to attempt to succeed into his power, who could not succeed into his spirit.

But it is evident from reason, that the fate and fortune of governments must naturally follow the personal abilities of the governor: for what is there else, that the strength of a kingdom can be supposed to lean upon, but one of these three; its treasure, its military power, or its laws? But now, none of all these can signify any thing, where the prince is not endued with that royal skill that is requisite to the due management of them. For surely the bare image of a prince upon the coin of any nation can neither improve or employ the treasure of it; nor can the military force of a kingdom do much to strengthen it, should the prince either wear a padlock upon his sword, or draw it in defence of his enemies. Nor lastly, can the laws much contribute to the support of it, if the execution of them be ei-

ther neglected or discountenanced: for it is not how laws are made, nor how they are interpreted, but how they are used, that must influence the public. By all which we see what moment there is in the sole person of a prince. For as he is qualified or disposed, so all these great things become helpful or ineffectual. The treasure, arms, and laws of a nation are all virtually in him. And it is he who must breathe life and efficacy into them all. Which is the first great reason, why God extends such a particular providence over the persons of kings, namely, because the main concerns of civil government and society, which Providence so much tenders the preservation of, are principally deposited in them.

Secondly, The other great reason is, because princes have the most powerful influence upon the concerns of religion, and the preservation of the church, of all other persons whatsoever. Religion is indeed an immortal seed, and the church is proof against the very gates of hell, as being founded upon a promise, and so standing fast in the eternal strength of God's veracity. Nevertheless, as to its outward state and circumstances in this world, it must clasp about the secular power, and as that frowns or smiles upon it, so it must droop or flourish. Accordingly God has declared kings to be nursing fathers of his church; and every prince, by the essential inherent right of his crown, is or should be a defender of the faith. He holds it by a charter from heaven; long before the pope's donation, who never gives any thing to princes, but what was their own before. Every Christian king is within his own dominions the great pastor, both to rule Christ's

flock, and to see it fed, though he does not feed it himself.

We know how glorious a deliverance our church received this day; and it was by the wisdom of that head which wore the crown, that God vouchsafed it to her. King and church then, as it is seldom otherwise, were both designed to the same fate. But God preserved the king, and the king the church. And who knows but for such a day as this, God paved his way before him in such a peaceable entrance into the English throne, so much above and against the expectation of the world round about him, and of the court of Rome especially; which, it is well known, had other designs upon the anvil at that time. And as he then saved the church from perishing by one blow; so he afterwards supported it from dying gradually, either by the encroachments of superstition, or the attempts of innovation.

And it is observable, (which I speak not in flattery, but in a profound sense of a blessing which the whole kingdom can never be thankful enough for,) that none of the families that ever reigned over this nation, have to their power been so careful and tender of the church, kept their hands so clean from any thing that might look like sacrilege, been so zealous of its privileges, and so kind to its ministers, as the royal family that now sways the sceptre in the succession of three several princes. And I doubt not but as sacrilege has blasted the mightiest families with a curse, so the abhorrence of it will and must perpetuate a blessing upon this.

And thus having despatched the several heads at first proposed, and shewn upon what accounts the

actings of God's providence may be said to be extraordinary; and by what ways and means this extraordinary providence saves and delivers princes, as also the reasons why it does so; I proceed now to the

Fourth and last thing proposed: which is, to make some useful deductions from what has been delivered; and it shall be by way of information concerning two things.

First, The duty and behaviour of princes towards God.

Secondly, The duty and behaviour of subjects towards their prince.

First. And first for that of princes towards God. It shews them from whom, in their distress, they are to expect, and to whom, in their glory, they are to ascribe all their deliverances. David was as great a warrior and as valiant a prince as ever reigned. In all his wars success waited upon his courage, and victory did homage to his sword; yet he tells us, that he would neither trust in his sword nor in his bow, nor in the alliance of princes. All auxiliaries but those from above, he found weak, fickle, and fallacious. And as princes are to own their great Deliverer, so are they to shew the world that they do so, by setting a due estimate upon the deliverance; especially when it is shewn in so signal an instance as that which we now commemorate. And whosoever he is, who really and cordially values any notable deliverance vouchsafed him by God, surely above all things it will concern him, not to court the mischief from which he has been delivered. But,

Secondly, which most properly belongs to us,

we learn from the premises the duty and behaviour of subjects towards their princes. Does not God, by such a protecting providence over kings, point out to us the sacredness of their persons; and command a reverence, where he himself thinks fit to place an honour? Does not every extraordinary deliverance of a prince carry this inscription upon it in the brightest characters, *Touch not mine anointed?* Whom God has placed upon the throne, shall any human power presume to drag to the bar? or shall royal heads be crowned and anointed only to prepare them to be sacrificed upon a scaffold?

As for our parts, when we reflect upon our prince, signalized by so many strange unparalleled rescues, ought they not both to endear him to our allegiance, and in a manner consecrate him to our veneration? For is not this he, whom in the loins of his royal progenitor, God, by this day's mercy, as I may so say, delivered before he was born? he, for whose sake God has since wrought so many miracles; covering his head in the day of battle, and, which is more, securing it after battle, when such a price was set upon it? Is not this he, whom the same Providence followed into banishment, and gave him safety and honour, where he had not so much as to lay his head, or to set his foot upon, that he could call his own? Is not this he, whom God brought back again by a miracle as great as that by which he brought Israel out of Egypt, not dividing, but, as it were, drying up a Red sea before him? Is not this he, whom neither the plots of his enemies at home, nor the united strength of those abroad, have been able to shake or supplant? And lastly, is not this he, whom neither the barbarous injuries of his rebel

subjects at home, nor the temptations of foreign princes abroad, nor all the arts of Rome besides, could in his greatest extremity bring over to the Romish profession; but that after all, he returned, and since his return still continues in the same communion which he was in when he went from us, *Carolus a Carolo*, firm and immoveable, like the son of a father, who could rather part with his crowns, kingdoms, and his very life, than quit his honour, or give up his religion?

For all which glorious things done for him and by him, may the same God, who has hitherto delivered him, order his affairs so, that he may never need another deliverance, but that he may grow old in peace and honour; and be as great as the love of his friends and the fears of his enemies can make him; commanding the hearts of the one, in spite of the hearts of the other; and, in a word, continue to reign over us, till mortality shall be swallowed up of immortality, and a temporal crown changed into an eternal.

Which God of his infinite mercy grant; to whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

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